**ALDERLEY EDGE COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY – SCHOOL EMPLOYEES**

# Scope

This policy applies to all employees of Alderley Edge Community Primary School

The principles of this policy will also apply to all consultants, self-employed contractors, casual workers, agency workers and volunteers in schools and academies. Anyone working or volunteering for the Alderley Edge Community Primary School is a representative of the Alderley Edge Community Primary School, both offline and when online (including on social media); the same standards apply to the behaviour and conduct of employees in both circumstances.

This policy does not form part of any employee’s contract of employment, and it may be amended at any time to reflect changing technologies and compliance standards following consultation with the recognised trade unions.

# Policy statement

This policy sets out Alderley Edge Community Primary School’s expectations on the use of social media in a work and personal capacity to ensure that its use is effective, lawful and does not compromise Alderley Edge Community Primary School. It outlines the standards of behaviour employees are required to adhere to when they are posting on social media, as well as the consequences of falling below those standards.

This policy is not intended to prevent the use of social media but to ensure that anyone working for, or with, Alderley Edge Community Primary School uses it with appropriate regard for the school’s values and zero tolerance of bullying and harassment at work, including sexual harassment.

Alderley Edge Community Primary School knows that digital technology has revolutionised the way in which people communicate and share information at local, national and international levels. Employees need to understand these changes so that they can operate effectively in a dynamic media environment.

Social media is a public forum and posts online are not necessarily private, so the same considerations apply as would to speaking in public or writing something for publication, either officially or in a personal capacity outside of work.

This policy seeks to ensure that:

* Alderley Edge Community Primary School is not exposed to legal challenge;
* the reputation of the Alderley Edge Community Primary School and its employees are not adversely affected or put at risk of reputational damage;
* employees do not put themselves in a vulnerable position;
* employees understand how information provided via social media applications can be representative of Alderley Edge Community Primary School;
* the use of social media does not have a negative impact on the Alderley Edge Community Primary School; and
* any cyber-bullying, intimidation or harassment (including sexual harassment) through social media are reported so the headteacher/manager can support and advise individuals on the appropriate next steps.

This document should be read in conjunction with the Alderley Edge Community Primary School’s Code of Conduct, ICT Policies (policies on the internet and security), Disciplinary Policy and Procedure, and the Dignity at Work Policy and Procedure.

## What employees can expect from the Alderley Edge Community Primary School

The Alderley Edge Community Primary School will:

* Make employees aware if they are required to use social media as part of their role and provide them with any relevant login details for the social media account/s.
* Address with employees any concerns and/or issues of misuse arising out of the use of social media.
* Report and escalate any incidents or concerns regarding social media as appropriate.
* Support employees if they are subject to cyber-bullying, intimidation or harassment (including sexual harassment) through social media, for example, defamation in connection with their job role and where it may result in a social media smear campaign, misinformation or malicious communications.

An employee’s headteacher/manager are key to enabling this commitment to employees.

## What Alderley Edge Community Primary School expects of employees

Alderley Edge Community Primary School expects employees to:

* Familiarise themselves with the detail and spirit of this policy when using social media.
* Use social media appropriately if it is part of their job role and adhere to the rules in this policy.
* Keep up to date with the latest changes and functionality of the social media platforms.
* Seek to ensure that any content, communication or contribution made on social media in a work capacity remains professional.
* Comply with the Alderley Edge Community Primary School’s ICT policies and procedures when using social media for work purposes, including having robust security measures in place to seek to ensure the protection of passwords to social media profiles.
* Inform the headteacher/manager if they suspect that the Alderley Edge Community Primary School’s social media accounts have been compromised or accessed by an unauthorised person.
* Not post, like or share content that could damage the Alderley Edge Community Primary School’s reputation in both a work and personal capacity.
* Speak to the headteacher/manager if they are unsure about any interaction on social media that may contravene the expected standards.
* Report any incidents of cyber-bullying, intimidation or harassment through social media in the course of their employment to the headteacher or their line manager.
* Read and abide by Accceptable use of IT policy and procedures to the use of social media and the school’s staff Code of Conduct.

# Definition of social media

The term ‘social media’ is used to describe forms of electronic communication through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages and other content. This includes blogs, photo sharing, video sharing, social networks and apps.

Social media is an increasingly popular form of communication as it allows people to share content quickly, efficiently and in real-time. It is used both socially and for business.

Social media differs from a telephone conversation or email; it is an interactive broadcast medium. This means that messages can be viewed by a much wider audience than just the intended recipient.

The most important thing to remember is that once a post or message is out there on social media it will always be out there, even if it is deleted it is likely to have been seen and shared by someone.

With respect to this policy, social media is any online platform or app that allows parties to communicate instantly with each other or to share data in a public forum. This includes social forums such as X (formerly known as Twitter), Facebook, and LinkedIn. Social media also covers blogs and video and image-sharing websites such as YouTube and TikTok. This is not an exhaustive list, there are many more examples of social media than can be included in this policy and this is a constantly changing area.

All employees should adhere to this policy in relation to any social media that is used or any app that is used that has features which align with social media platforms, for example, Snapchat or WhatsApp (status updates, group chats etc.).

# Social media accounts

Alderley Edge Community Primary School regularly reviews the use of their social media accounts in what is an ever-changing landscape to reach different audiences with the school’s messages. Alderley Edge Community Primary School currently use the following social media platforms:

* PTA – Facebook, Twitter
* WhatsAPP groups
* School Spider

# Context of use

Alderley Edge Community Primary School participate in interactive discussions and share information using a wide variety of social media. The scope of this policy applies to those who are likely to use social media privately (outside of work) as well as in their role during office hours or otherwise – whether the social media is accessed using school’s ICT facilities, or by using personal equipment where they may be representing Alderley Edge Community Primary School, such as that of an employee.

# Compliance with related policies and procedures

Employees should never use social media in a way that breaches any Alderley Edge Community Primary School ‘s policies. If an internet post would breach any of the school’s policies in another forum, it will also breach them in an online forum. Employees are prohibited from using social media to:

* breach the school’s ICT policies and procedures;
* breach the school’s obligations with respect to the rules of relevant regulatory bodies;
* breach any obligations contained in those policies relating to confidentiality;
* breach the school’s Disciplinary Policy and Procedure;
* breach the school’s Dignity at Work Policy and Procedure;
* unlawfully discriminate against other employees or third parties;
* breach the school’s Data Protection Policy (for example, never disclose any confidential, personal, secure, or protected information obtained in their capacity as an employee of Alderley Edge Community Primary School); or
* breach any other laws or regulatory requirements.

If employees are unsure about any interaction on social media that may contravene the school’s expected standards for personal social media usage or breaches any of other school policies, employees should speak to the headteacher for clarification and refrain from posting it until it has been discussed.

Employees should never provide references for other individuals on social or professional networking sites. These references, positive and negative, can be attributed to the school and create legal liability for both the author of the reference and the school.

# Prohibited use

Alderley Edge Community Primary School recognises that an employee may be a parent and/or local resident, so there may be school/academy-related matters that they wish to comment on or contribute to. It is also recognised that employees may connect with colleagues (‘friends’) in a personal/social capacity through social media. However, employees must avoid making any social media communications that could damage the school’s reputation or working relationships, even indirectly. Employees must:

* not use social media to bring the school into disrepute or make defamatory or disparaging comments or grievances about the school, colleagues, pupils (including their families) or other associated individuals or organisations;
* not post, like or share images or graphic content that are inappropriate or share links to inappropriate images or graphic content;
* not post or share links to inappropriate sexually explicit or provocative images or content;
* use caution if posting any content regarding the school;
* not breach confidentiality by uploading, sharing, discussing or posting comments about sensitive, personal, secure or protected information owned by the school or partner organisations or information about pupils, employees or other individuals associated with the school, for example, agency workers, consultants etc.);
* not make false representations or post/share content in the course of their work that could breach copyright, for example, using someone else’s images or written content without permission or failing to give acknowledgement where permission has been given to reproduce something;
* not post anything that could be considered discriminatory against, bullying or harassment of any individual;
* not allow their interaction with social media to damage working relationships between colleagues or other stakeholders;
* not use social media to deliberately make false or misleading statements; or
* not use social media to impersonate colleagues.

Employees are not permitted to connect with pupils through personal social media accounts, including their families. Alderley Edge Community Primary School considers it inappropriate to have pupils as ‘friends’ on social media. **Contact through social media in this capacity will only be permitted where it has been clearly and firmly established by the headteacher or chair of governors.**

Employees should also avoid using social media platforms as a means of contacting colleagues outside of normal working hours.

# Social media usage for work purposes

The headteacher/manager is responsible for making an employee aware if they are required to use a school social media account as part of their job role, and they will be provided with relevant login details for the account/s.

Alderley Edge Community Primary School encourages employees to make reasonable and appropriate use of social media if it is part of their role. However, employees must be always aware that, while contributing to the school’s social media activities, employees are representing the school. If employees use social media as part of their job, employees must adhere to the rules outlined previously (see ‘Prohibited Use’).

Employees should use the same safeguards as they would with any other form of communication about the school in the public domain. These safeguards include ensuring that the communication has a purpose and benefit for the school, and that the timing is appropriate and relevant. All content should also be reviewed, and relevant permission sought prior to posting to ensure accuracy and that it is suitable for its intended audience, this includes ensuring accessibility requirements are met where necessary.

Employees should also understand and abide by each individual social media platform’s privacy notices and guidelines, and employees should not use school social media profiles, for example, Facebook, in the course of their work to actively monitor and ‘watch’ members of the public or the school community.

If there has been an information security breach, i.e. an incident which puts confidential information at risk of being lost/stolen, accessed inappropriately (either deliberately or accidentally), or disclosed to the wrong people, it must be reported straight away so that the school can take immediate steps to mitigate any risks, including suspending social media accounts.

As part of any exit process, i.e. where employee leaves Alderley Edge Community Primary School and they use social media for work purposes, the headteacher/manager is responsible for arranging for any access/passwords to be changed and/or social profiles to be deleted to ensure that there are continuity arrangements in place.

# Guidelines for responsible use of social media in their personal life

The school recognises that many employees make use of social media in a personal capacity. However, the employee's personal online profile should not contain the school’s name (such as a username or ‘handle’) or use the school’s logo. Employees should also seek to ensure that their profile information on social media accounts is appropriate, and they should check their privacy and security settings.

Employees should ensure that their profile and any content they post are consistent with their professional status, relevant professional standards, and Alderley Edge Community Primary School ‘s values and behaviours that are expected.

Employees should be mindful it may be possible to identify them as an employee by the content of information they have posted on their social media profile or through other work colleagues they are friends with. This can make an employee identifiable to pupils and parents, as well as people they know in a private capacity.

Employees should also be mindful that their actions on personal social media accounts could potentially damage the school’s reputation, especially if employees have specified their role and/or employer.

Employees should be respectful to others when making any statement on social media and be aware that they are personally responsible for all communications which are published on the internet for anyone to see.

Employees should adhere to the standards of behaviour set out in the school’s Code of Conduct when using social media, which includes declaring any external activities, for example, income-generating social media presence/content) that may affect their employment with the school.

If employees are uncertain or concerned about the appropriateness of any statement or posting, they should refrain from posting it or discuss any concerns with their headteacher/manager.

If an employee views social media content that disparages or reflects poorly on the school, they should contact the headteacher/manager.

# Social media usage during working hours

Employees are not allowed to access social networking sites, for example, Facebook, X (formerly known as Twitter) for their personal use from the school's computers at any time. This includes laptop/tablets or other devices, for example mobile phones, distributed by the school for work purposes.

Alderley Edge Community Primary School understands that employees may wish to use their own computers, laptops or other devices, for example mobile phones, to access social media websites while they are at work. Employees must limit their personal use of social media on their own equipment to their official rest breaks such as on their lunch break/times. The use of any personal computers, laptops or other devices must be discreet, appropriate (not in the presence of pupils for example) and in no way interfere with work.

Mobile phones should be stored safely so that no one else can access the phone. They should not be visible to the children. Personal mobile phones must never be used for making calls or taking images when working with, or supervising children. (See 79. Mobile Phones and Other Smart Devices policy)

# Monitoring use of internet

The school/academy reserves the right to monitor, intercept and review, without further notice, an employee’s activities using the school’s ICT resources and communications systems, including but not limited to social media postings and activities, for legitimate purposes which include:

* ascertaining and demonstrating that in using the systems employees are meeting expected standards; and
* the detection and investigation of unauthorised use of the systems (including where this is necessary to prevent or detect crime).

For further information, see the school’s 77. Online Safety including Acceptable Use Policy.

# Breach of this policy

In situations where employees have breached this policy and/or it becomes known that they have used social media in a way that has breached any of the other school policies, for example, posted potentially damaging material or other incidents such as bullying colleagues, it may constitute misconduct or gross misconduct, and may be dealt with in accordance with the school’s disciplinary policy and procedure.

For consultants, self-employed contractors, casual workers, agency workers and volunteers who are found to have breached this policy, there may be consequences including non-renewal or termination of contract.

Employees may be required to remove any social media content that the school considers to constitute a breach of this policy. Failure to comply with the request may in itself, result in disciplinary action.

# Support for those affected or involved

In situations where employees have been accused of social media misconduct or are the subject of cyber-bullying, intimidation or harassment through social media in the course of their employment, they are encouraged to speak up without delay and ask for support.

Employees are also encouraged to report any incidents, including incidents perpetrated by a third party (for example, a parent or supplier), to the headteacher or their line manager as soon as possible. The headteacher/manager will advise and support the individual on the next steps and signpost them to the appropriate procedure (this will depend on the nature of the complaint). Further advice may be sought by the headteacher/manager from Human Resources.

Employees should also seek support from colleagues, friends, family or a trade union if they are a member, because any form of cyber-bullying, intimidation or harassment can have a negative impact on their mental health and wellbeing.

The school/academy also provides access to occupational health support via Optima customer services:

Email - [team12@optimahealth.co.uk](mailto:team12@optimahealth.co.uk)

Phone - Phone: 0161 831 9701

External sources of help and support are also available:

[Mental health support for people at work | Able Futures Mental Health Support Service (able-futures.co.uk)](https://able-futures.co.uk/individuals)

[Education Support, supporting teachers and education staff](https://www.educationsupport.org.uk/)

# Useful links

14. Staff Code of Conduct

36. AECPS Safeguarding and Child Protection

63. Whistleblowing policy

68. Prevention and Management of Bullying

77. AECPS Online Safety including Acceptable Use policy

79. Mobile Phones and other Smart Devices policy

82. AECPS Data Protection policy

83. Capability Policy and Procedure (teachers)

85. Dignity at Work policy

101. Social media for the school community policy

103. Disciplinary policy and procedures

106. Capability Policy and Procedure (support staff)

111. Policy for staff wellbeing

# Equality

Alderley Edge Community Primary School is committed to promoting equal opportunities in employment. Employees (and any job applicants) will receive equal treatment regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marital or civil partner status, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation or caring responsibility. This means that the application of the policy may need to be adjusted to cater for the specific needs of an individual including the provision of information in alternative formats where necessary.

# Monitoring and review

The school will monitor this policy to ensure that it is operating fairly, consistently, and effectively. The policy will be reviewed in the light of operating experience and/or changes in legislation.

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Reviewed: minimum every 2 years

Next Review Date: October 2026