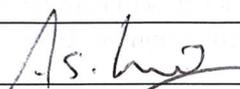


Hanwell Fields Community School

Social Media Policy 2026-2028

Ratified by Governors Date:	9 th February 2026
Signed by Chair of Governors:	Andrew Lister 
Signed by Head Teacher:	Alex Pearson 
Next Review Date:	February 2028

INTRODUCTION

This policy statement is intended to serve as guidance for United Learning schools, which are responsible for developing and implementing their own policy, tailored to their specific context. It is not anticipated that any school will adopt this document without amendment.

The internet provides a range of social media tools that allow users to interact with one another, for example from rediscovering friends on social networking sites such as *Facebook* to keeping up with other people's lives on *Twitter* and maintaining pages on internet encyclopaedias such as *Wikipedia*.

While recognising the benefits of these media as new opportunities for communication, this policy sets out the principles that United Learning staff and contractors are expected to follow when using social media.

It is crucial that pupils, parents and the public at large have confidence in schools' decisions and services. The principles set out in this policy statement are designed to ensure that staff members use social media responsibly so that confidentiality of pupils and other staff and the reputation of the school and United Learning are safeguarded.

This policy statement also aims to help staff use social media with minimal professional risk. Staff members must be conscious at all times of the need to keep their personal and professional lives separate.

Scope

This policy covers personal and professional use of social media as well as the use of social media for official United Learning/ school purposes, including sites hosted and maintained on behalf of either.

This policy applies to personal web presences such as social networking sites (for example *Facebook*,) blogs and microblogs (such as *Twitter*), chatrooms, forums, podcasts, open access online encyclopaedias (such as *Wikipedia*), social bookmarking sites and content sharing sites (such as *YouTube*). The internet is a fast moving technology and it is impossible to cover all circumstances or emerging media - the principles set out in this policy must be followed irrespective of the medium.

Legal Framework

United Learning is committed to ensuring that all staff members provide confidential services that meet the highest standards. All individuals working on behalf of United Learning are bound by a legal duty of confidence and other laws to protect the confidential information they have access to during the course of their work. Disclosure of confidential information on social media is likely to be a breach of a number of laws and professional codes of conduct, including:

- the Human Rights Act 1998
- Common law duty of confidentiality, and
- the Data Protection Act 1998.

Staff should also be aware of the guidance and sanctions contained within the United Learning Disciplinary Policy

Confidential information includes, but is not limited to:

- Person-identifiable information, e.g. student and employee records protected by the Data Protection Act 1998 (see Data Protection Policy)
- Information divulged in the expectation of confidentiality
- School or United Learning business or corporate records containing organisationally or publicly sensitive information
- Any commercially sensitive information such as information relating to commercial proposals or current negotiations, and
- Politically sensitive information.

Staff members should also be aware that other laws relating to libel, defamation, harassment and copyright may apply to information posted on social media, including:

- Libel Act 1843
- Defamation Acts 1952 and 1996
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994
- Malicious Communications Act 1998
- Communications Act 2003, and
- Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

Schools and United Learning could be held vicariously responsible for acts of their employees in the course of their employment. For example, staff members who harass co-workers online or who engage in cyberbullying or discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, disability, etc or who defame a third party while at work may render the schools and United Learning liable to the injured party.

Professional and School Use of Social Media

Many schools maintain presences on various social media sites as they provide very effective additional channels of communication with parents/ carers, students and the wider community.

For example, Twitter is used to collate and publicise a stream of positive messages about the multitude of activities that go on at United Learning schools every day. Some staff have chosen to play a part in this use of social media for professional purposes, often to highlight successes and to encourage participation in their area of work

This is not without risk, however and staff members should be aware that;

- services such as Twitter are in the public domain and are regularly used by journalists, students, parents and employers
- submissions can take on a life of their own once sent by users, who should not rely on being able to delete them
- Schools and United Learning may re-tweet the submissions of staff members to their wider following
- Students or parents may retweet comments and pictures which directly relate to them, their family or their friends.

A picture of a girl with an outstanding piece of work is tweeted by the school – it does not name her – but is retweeted by the parent and mentions (@’s) his daughter. A predator would now have a picture, name and social media presence of parent and daughter. This may be enough to allow them to start grooming the individual.

- The ability to post anonymous comments to social media platforms, such as Twitter, may result in offensive or upsetting comments being directed at schools or staff.

Personal Use of Social Media

It is reasonable for members of staff to maintain personal web presences in their lives beyond their school life. Indeed, in 2012 over 53% of the UK population had a Facebook account.

School staff, however, occupy an almost unique professional position due to their work with children and the moral credibility they must maintain. There have been several recent cases where school staff have suffered serious professional consequences as a result of poor judgement in the use of social media.

It is worth considering that information (text, images, video) held in web presences;

- is never completely private and can very easily enter the public domain
- can be misinterpreted by audiences it was not originally intended for
- may persist beyond your wishes
- might be copied and used by third parties without your consent

It is therefore vital that use of social media in staff’s lives beyond the school be totally separated from their professional identity. However, staff should be aware that even if this separation is strictly adhered to, it remains relatively easy for people (students, journalists, future employers etc.) to connect staff in schools with ‘private’ social media presences.

General social media use

-  Expectations regarding safe and responsible use of social media will apply to all members of Hanwell Fields Community School and exist in order to safeguard both the school and the wider community, on and offline. Examples of social media may include blogs, wikis, social networking, forums, bulletin boards, multiplayer online gaming, apps, video/photo sharing sites, chatrooms, instant messenger and many others.
-  All members of Hanwell Fields Community School will be encouraged to engage in social media in a positive, safe and responsible manner at all times.
-  Information about safe and responsible use of social media will be communicated clearly and regularly to all members of Hanwell Fields Community School.

- 🌸 All members of Hanwell Fields Community School community are advised not to publish specific and detailed private thoughts, concerns, pictures or messages on any social media services, especially content that may be considered threatening, hurtful or defamatory to others.
- 🌸 The school will control pupils and staff access to social media and social networking sites whilst on site and using school provided devices and systems
- 🌸 The use of social networking applications during school hours for personal use is/is not permitted,
- 🌸 Inappropriate or excessive use of social media during school hours or whilst using school devices may result in disciplinary or legal action and/or removal of Internet facilities.
- 🌸 Any concerns regarding the online conduct of any member of Hanwell Fields Community School on social media sites should be reported to the school leadership team and will be managed in accordance with existing school policies such as anti-bullying, allegations against staff, behaviour and safeguarding/child protection.
- 🌸 Any breaches of school policy may result in criminal, disciplinary or civil action being taken and this will depend upon the age of those involved and the circumstances of the wrong committed. Action taken will be in accordance with the relevant school policies, such as anti-bullying, allegations against staff, behaviour and safeguarding/child protection.

Official use of social media

- 🌸 Official use of social media sites by the school will only take place with clear educational or community engagement objectives with specific intended outcomes e.g. increasing parental engagement.
- 🌸 Official use of social media sites as communication tools will be risk assessed and formally approved by the headteacher.
- 🌸 Official school social media channels will be set up as distinct and dedicated social media site or account for educational or engagement purposes.
- 🌸 Staff will use school provided email addresses to register for and manage official school approved social media channels.
- 🌸 Members of staff running official school social media channels will sign a specific Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) to ensure they are aware of the required behaviours and expectations of use and to ensure that sites are used safely, responsibly and in accordance with local and national guidance and legislation.
- 🌸 All communication on official school social media platforms will be clear, transparent and open to scrutiny.
- 🌸 Any online publication on official school social media sites will comply with legal requirements including the Data Protection Act 1998, right to privacy conferred by the Human Rights Act 1998, or similar duty to protect private information and will not breach any common law duty of confidentiality, copyright etc.
- 🌸 Official social media use by the school will be in line with existing policies including anti-bullying and child protection.
- 🌸 Images or videos of children will only be shared on official school social media sites/channels in accordance with the school image use policy.
- 🌸 Information about safe and responsible use of school social media channels will be communicated clearly and regularly to all members of the school community.

- 🌸 Official social media sites, blogs or wikis will be suitably protected (e.g. password protected) and where possible/appropriate, run and/or linked to from the school website and take place with written approval from the Leadership Teams.
- 🌸 Leadership staff must be aware of account information and relevant details for social media channels in case of emergency such as staff absence.
- 🌸 Parents/Carers and pupils will be informed of any official school social media use, along with expectations for safe use and school action taken to safeguard the community.
- 🌸 Hanwell Fields Community School official social media channels are:
 - Facebook page, School Website, Class Dojo, Tapestry
- Public communications on behalf of the school will, where possible, be read and agreed by at least one other colleague.
- The school social media account will link back to the school website and/or Acceptable Use Policy to demonstrate that the account is official. Thinking FB - Is this being done and have we attached the policy?
- The school will ensure that any official social media use does not exclude members of the community who are unable or unwilling to use social media channels.

Staff professional use of social media

- 🌸 If members of staff are participating in online activity as part of their capacity as an employee of the school, then they are requested to be professional at all times and that they are an ambassador for the school.
- 🌸 Staff using social media professionally will disclose their official role/position but always make it clear that they do not necessarily speak on behalf of the school.
- 🌸 Staff using social media professionally will be responsible, credible, fair and honest at all times and consider how the information being published could be perceived or shared.
- 🌸 Staff using social media officially will always act within the legal frameworks they would adhere to within school, including libel, defamation, confidentiality, copyright, data protection as well as equalities laws.
- 🌸 Staff must ensure that any image posted on the school social media channel have appropriate written parental consent.
- 🌸 Staff using social media professionally will be accountable and must not disclose information, make commitments or engage in activities on behalf of the school unless they are authorised to do so.
- 🌸 Staff using social media professionally will inform their line manager, the school online safety (e-Safety) lead and/or the head teacher of any concerns such as criticism or inappropriate content posted online.
- 🌸 Staff will not engage with any direct or private messaging with pupils or parents/carers through social media and should communicate via school communication channels.
- 🌸 Staff using social media professionally will sign the school social media Acceptable Use Policy before official social media use will take place.

Staff personal use of social media

-  Staff members must not/are advised not to identify themselves as employees of the school or United Learning in their personal web presences or purport to represent the views of either organisation
-  Personal use of social networking, social media and personal publishing sites will be discussed with all members of staff as part of staff induction and will be revisited and communicated via regular staff training opportunities.
-  Safe and professional behaviour will be outlined for all members of staff (including volunteers) as part of the school Acceptable Use Policy.
-  All members of staff are advised not to communicate with or add as 'friends' any current or past pupils or current or past pupils' family members via any personal social media sites, applications or profiles. Any pre-existing relationships or exceptions that may compromise this will be discussed with line manager/ member of Leadership Team/headteacher.
-  If ongoing contact with pupils is required once they have left the school roll, then members of staff will be expected to use existing alumni networks or use official school provided communication tools.
-  All communication between staff and members of the school community on school business will take place via official approved communication channels (*such as school email address or phone numbers*). Staff must not use personal accounts or information to make contact with pupils or parents, nor should any contact be accepted, except in circumstance whereby prior approval has been given by the Headteacher/manager.
-  Any communication from pupils/parents received on personal social media accounts will be reported to the schools designated safeguarding lead.
-  Information staff members have access to as part of their employment, including photos and personal information about pupils and their family members, colleagues etc. will not be shared or discussed on personal social media sites.
-  All members of staff are strongly advised to safeguard themselves and their privacy when using social media sites. This will include being aware of location sharing services, setting the privacy levels of their personal sites as strictly as they can, opting out of public listings on social networking sites, logging out of accounts after use and keeping passwords safe and confidential.
-  All members of staff are encouraged to carefully consider the information, including text and images, they share and post online and should ensure that their social media use is compatible with their professional role, in accordance with schools policies (safeguarding, confidentiality, data protection etc.) and the wider professional and legal framework.
-  Members of staff will be encouraged to manage and control the content they share and post online. Advice will be provided to staff via staff training and by sharing appropriate guidance and resources on a regular basis.
-  Members of staff will notify the Leadership/Management Team immediately if they consider that any content shared or posted via any information and communications technology, including emails or social networking sites conflicts with their role in the school/setting.
-  Staff members must not initiate contact with former pupils by means of personal social media sites whilst that pupil is under the age of 18 or in full time secondary or 16 to 19 education

-  Staff members must not edit open access online encyclopaedias such as Wikipedia in a personal capacity from work
- Employees should be aware that United Learning has a policy for raising concerns at work and this should be followed should any concerns arise. Using a social networking site to raise any concerns at work will not be considered as appropriate
- Member of staff will ensure that they do not represent their personal views as that of the school on social media.
- School email addresses will not be used for setting up personal social media accounts.
- Members of staff who follow/like the schools social media channels will be advised to use dedicated professional accounts where possible to avoid blurring professional boundaries.

Pupils use of social media

-  Safe and responsible use of social media sites will be outlined for pupils and their parents as part of the school Acceptable Use Policy.
-  Personal publishing on social media sites will be taught to pupils as part of an embedded and progressive education approach via age appropriate sites which have been risk assessed and approved as suitable for educational purposes.
-  Pupils will be advised to consider the risks of sharing personal details of any kind on social media sites which may identify them and / or their location. Examples would include real/full name, address, mobile or landline phone numbers, school attended, Instant messenger contact details, email addresses, full names of friends/family, specific interests and clubs etc.
-  Pupils will be advised not to meet any online friends without a parent/carer or other responsible adult's permission and only when they can be present.
-  Pupils will be advised on appropriate security on social media sites and will be encouraged to use safe passwords, deny access to unknown individuals and be supported in learning how to block and report unwanted communications.
-  Pupils will be encouraged to approve and invite known friends only on social networking sites and to deny access to others by making profiles private/protected.
-  Parents will be informed of any official social media use with pupils and written parental consent will be obtained, as required.
-  Any official social media activity involving pupils will be moderated by the school where possible.
-  The school is aware that many popular social media sites state that they are not for children under the age of 13, therefore the School will not create accounts within school specifically for children under this age.
-  Any concerns regarding pupils' use of social networking, social media and personal publishing sites, both at home and at school, will be dealt with in accordance with existing school policies including anti-bullying and behaviour. Concerns will be raised with their parents/carers, particularly when concerning any underage use of social media sites.

