Social Media Policy

Redbridge Community School

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1. Introduction

1.1 'Social media' is the term commonly given to web-based tools which allow users to interact with each other in some way – by sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interests online. As the name implies, social media involves the building of online communities or networks to encourage participation and engagement.

1.2 To avoid major mistakes which could result in reputational, legal and ethical issues, and misuse/abuse of a well-functioning social media relationship, it is important that we **manage** any potential risks through a common-sense approach and framework as well as proactively monitoring the development of such applications.

2. Aim

2.1 This policy aims to provide managers and individual employees with information concerning the use of, or the development of, any social media application, and to help them get the best out of the tools available whilst maintaining a safe professional environment and protecting themselves, as well as Redbridge Community School.

3. Definition of social media

3.1 For the purposes of these guidelines, social media is a type of interactive online media that allows parties to communicate instantly with each other or to share data in a public forum. This includes e-mail, online social forums, blogs, video and image-sharing websites and similar facilities.

3.2 Employees should be aware that there are many more examples of social media than can be listed here and this is a constantly changing area. Employees should follow these guidelines in relation to any social media that they use.

4. Use of social media

4.1 Employees may contribute to Redbridge Community School's social media activities, for example by managing a social media account.

4.2 Employees must be aware at all times that, while contributing to Redbridge Community School's social media activities, they are representing the school. Staff who use social media as part of their job must adhere to the following safeguards.

4.3 Employees should use the same safeguards as they would with any other form of communication about Redbridge Community School in the public sphere. These safeguards include:
- making sure that the communication has a purpose and a benefit for the school;
- obtaining permission from a member of the senior team before embarking on a public campaign using social media; and
- getting a member of the senior team to check the content before it is published.

4.4 Any communications that employees make in a professional capacity through social media must not:
- breach confidentiality, for example by:
  - revealing confidential intellectual property or information owned by Redbridge Community School or;
  - giving away confidential information about an individual (such as a colleague) or organisation (such as a partner institution); or
  - discussing the school's internal workings (such as how the school runs on a day to day basis) or;
- do anything that could be considered discriminatory against, or bullying or harassment of, any individual, for example by:
  - making offensive or derogatory comments relating to sex, gender reassignment, race (including nationality), disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief or age or;
  - using social media to bully another individual (such as an employee of the school); or
  - posting images that are discriminatory or offensive or links to such content or;
- bring Redbridge Community School into disrepute, for example by:
  - criticising or arguing with colleagues, parents or competitors or;
  - making defamatory comments about individuals or other organisations or groups; or
  - posting images that are inappropriate or links to inappropriate content or;
- breach copyright, for example by:
  - using someone else's images or written content without permission; or
  - failing to give acknowledgement where permission has been given to reproduce something.
- Re-posting comments/images/links from another person which do not adhere to all of the above.

5. Monitoring use of social media during work time

5.1 Redbridge Community School reserves the right to monitor employees' internet usage. The school considers that valid reasons for checking an employee's internet usage include suspicions that the employee has:
- been spending an excessive amount of time using social media websites for non-work-related activity; or
- acted in a way that is in breach of the rules set out in these guidelines.

6. Social media in your personal life

6.1 Redbridge Community School recognises that many employees make use of social media in a personal capacity. While they are not acting on behalf of the school, employees must be aware that they can damage the school if they are recognised as being one of our employees.

6.2 Employees are allowed to say that they work for the school, which recognises that it is natural for its staff sometimes to want to discuss their work on social media.

6.3 If employees do discuss their work on social media (for example, giving opinions on their specialism), they should include on their profile a statement along the following lines: "The views I express here are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of my employer."

6.4 Any communications that employees make in a personal capacity through social media must not:
- breach confidentiality, for example by:
  - revealing confidential intellectual property or information owned by the school or;
  - giving away confidential information about an individual (such as a colleague or partner contact) or organisation (such as a partner institution); or
  - discussing the school's internal workings (such as how the school runs on a day to day basis) or;
- do anything that could be considered discriminatory against, or bullying or harassment of, any individual, for example by:
  - making offensive or derogatory comments relating to sex, gender reassignment, race (including nationality), disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief or age or;
  - using social media to bully another individual (such as an employee of the school) or;
  - posting images that are discriminatory or offensive or links to such content or;
- bring the school into disrepute, for example by:
  - criticising or arguing with students, parents, colleagues, parents or competitors or;
  - making defamatory comments about Redbridge Community School individuals or other organisations or groups or;
  - posting images that are inappropriate or links to inappropriate content or;
- breach copyright, for example by:
  - using someone else's images or written content without permission; or
  - failing to give acknowledgement where permission has been given to reproduce something.
- Re-posting comments/images/links from another person which do not adhere to all of the above.

7. Disciplinary action over social media use

7.1 All employees are required to adhere to these guidelines. Employees should be aware that use of social media in a way that may be deemed as deliberate or inadvertent misuse which could be a breach of these guidelines, may lead to disciplinary action under the school's Disciplinary Procedure. Serious breaches of these guidelines, for example incidents of bullying of colleagues or social media activity causing serious reputational damage to the school, may constitute gross misconduct and may lead to action under the disciplinary procedure up to and including dismissal.

8. Review

8.1 The fast changing nature of information technology, particularly in relation to electronic communication incorporating aspects such as social media, means that these guidelines should be reviewed on an annual basis.

8.2 If employees have genuine grievances with the school the whistle blowing policy can be utilised when all other avenues have been exhausted.

We advise all colleagues to observe these guidelines when participating in an online conversation regarding education. Redbridge Community School personnel should refer to the more detailed information available within the school's Social Media Policy.

In brief, our guidelines for engaging on the social Web consist of the following core principles:

1. **Honesty about who you are**
2. **Clarity that your opinions are your own**
3. **Respect and humility in all communication**
4. **Good judgement in sharing only public information**
5. **Awareness that what you say is permanent**

Be honest about who you are

If the conversation relates to Redbridge Community School, you should identify yourself as working for the school in the content of your post/comment/other content. Best practice is always to be honest about who you are without giving out detailed personal information.

Make it clear that the views expressed are yours

Include the following notice somewhere in every social media profile you maintain: *"The views I express here are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of my employer."*

You speak for yourself but your actions reflect those of Redbridge Community School

Unless you have been authorised by the senior team, you cannot speak on behalf of Redbridge Community School. Do not portray yourself as a spokesperson, even an "unofficial" spokesperson, on issues relating to Redbridge Community School. Realise that people may likely form an opinion about the school based on the behaviour of its personnel.

Use your common sense

It's good practice to keep certain topics confidential. Respect confidentiality. Keep topics focused to matters of public record when speaking about education. Do not disclose the personal information of others.

Mind your manners

Treat past and present colleagues, and yourself with respect. Avoid posting materials or comments that may be seen as offensive, demeaning, inappropriate, threatening, or abusive. Acknowledge differences of opinion. Respectfully withdraw from discussions that go off topic or become profane.

The Internet is a public space

Consider everything you post to the Internet the same as anything you would post to a physical notice board or submit to a newspaper. Many eyes may fall upon your words, including those of reporters, students, the senior team, colleagues, and parents. Assume that all of these people will be reading every post, no matter how obscure or secure the site to which you are posting may seem.

The Internet remembers

Search engines and other technologies make it virtually impossible to take something back. Be sure you mean what you say, and say what you mean.

An official response may be needed

If you spot a potential issue and believe an official school response is needed, bring it to the attention of a member of the senior team before it reaches a crisis situation. Potential issues can often be resolved more effectively and efficiently if they are identified quickly.

Respect the privacy of offline conversations

Protect your colleagues by refraining from sharing their personal information or any conversations or statements unless you have their written permission to do so. Bringing someone else into an online conversation without their permission can be destructive to a relationship, cause misunderstandings or violate laws.

Same rules and laws apply: new medium, no surprise

Due to the nature of the digital medium, extra diligence is required in respecting intellectual property (such as copyright and trademark).

When in doubt, ask

If you have any questions about what is appropriate, play it smart and check with a member of the senior team.