



ABINGDON

Abingdon School, Abingdon Prep School and Abingdon Sport and Leisure Social Media Policy

1. Aims and Scope

- 1.1. This policy applies to the use of social media and networking applications by staff (including casual and self-employed staff, volunteers and governors) and pupils at Abingdon School, Abingdon Prep School and ASE and gives guidance to staff, pupils, parents, Old Abingdonians and the wider community on their personal use of social media.
- 1.2. This policy is designed to give guidance that will both protect individuals and seek to promote the responsible and appropriate use of social media for those who make up the Abingdon community.
- 1.3. This policy applies regardless of whether social media is accessed through school IT facilities or personal devices and whether accessed on school premises or elsewhere.

2. Rationale

- 2.1. Social media offers important opportunities to engage and communicate with its stakeholders and the wider community.
- 2.2. A careful balance needs to be maintained between the right to express individual views and beliefs, upholding responsibilities to the Schools and ASE and the appropriateness of individual behaviour.
- 2.3. The difference between a personal and professional opinion can be blurred on social media, particularly when discussing issues relating to work or school. Publication and commentary on social media carries similar obligations to any other kind of publication or commentary in the public domain.
- 2.4. Individuals should understand that there are no guarantees that anything posted online will remain private (even if in private groups or settings) and should remember that views expressed online and activity online could lead to disciplinary action, in accordance with the School's disciplinary policies, should such views or activity be considered to have contravened the School's code of conduct or policies.
- 2.5. An individual's 'digital footprint' is becoming increasingly significant when it comes to job and university applications. If inappropriate posts or comments are made it is extremely difficult, and in most cases impossible, to remove social media posts from internet archives.
- 2.6. Clear standards are essential to maintain professionalism, safeguarding, and protect the reputation of the Schools, their stakeholders and the wider community.

3. Definitions and Other Considerations

- 3.1. Social media is defined as web-based tools and applications that enable users to create and share content (words, sounds, images and video content) and network with each other

through the sharing of information, opinions, knowledge and common interests. Examples of social media include, but are not limited to, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, Snapchat, TikTok and X. It also includes forums and discussion boards such as Google Groups and Reddit, online encyclopaedias such as Wikipedia, and any other websites that allow individuals or organisations to use publishing tools.

- 3.2. Individuals should bear in mind that information they share through social networking applications, even if they are in private spaces, may be subject to copyright, safeguarding and data protection legislation. They must also operate in line with the School's other policies including the [Safeguarding and Child Protection policy](#); [Anti-bullying policy](#), [Safer Recruitment policy](#); [ICT and E-Safety policies](#); [Equal Opportunities Policy](#), [Code of Conduct](#) and our [Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#) statement.

4. Staff Use of Official School and ASE Social Media

- 4.1. Official social media accounts associated with the School or ASE must be set up by the Communications and Marketing Department, using official email accounts and appropriate branding.
- 4.2. The Communications and Marketing Department is responsible for managing and monitoring official accounts to ensure consistency and compliance.
- 4.3. Individuals must not set up accounts that appear to be official school accounts without permission from the Director of Marketing and Communications.
- 4.4. Content on official accounts must be professional, and only authorised individuals may post, access and modify account settings.
- 4.5. Please remember that using images of students and staff requires consent and should adhere to safeguarding guidelines and be in accordance with the Taking and Storing Images of Children Policy.

5. Guidance for staff on the personal use of social media

- 5.1. Staff should refrain from actions on social media that breach policies, including but not limited to [IT & E-Safety](#), [Safeguarding Policy](#), [Equal Opportunities Policy](#), and [Code of Conduct](#) policies. This includes any use of social media to bully or harass any other individual. The School does not tolerate any form of online abuse including, bullying, trolling, stalking or grooming.
- 5.2. Personal opinions shared on social media should be clearly distinguished from official positions of the Schools or ASE. Staff should not use the School or ASE's name or trademarks in any personal posts on social media.
- 5.3. Staff must not disclose any confidential School or ASE information, any personal information relating to any member of the School or ASE or engage in behaviour that could harm the School or ASE's interests or reputation on social media.
- 5.4. Staff should avoid direct communication with pupils from their own personal social media accounts and report any interactions in accordance with the [Code of Conduct](#). This includes any pupils who have left the School in the last 3 years.

- 5.5. Personal content should not overlap with professional responsibilities. Posts on personal accounts should not contain material or information on or about the School unless an individual is reposting posts from official School accounts.
- 5.6. The School recognises that staff and others have a need, at times, to conduct personal business within social media while at work or using school resources. The School therefore allows limited access to non-business social media content. For example, employees are allowed reasonable access to personal communications, email, and messages within social media, if accessed in employees' own time (during breaks for example), do not affect productivity or work schedules and are not accessed when visible to the wider school community (whilst with or visible by parents, pupils or visitors).
- 5.7. When leaving employment, staff should ensure they update any social media profiles which reference Abingdon as their employer (LinkedIn for instance).

6. Guidance on social media use by parents and Old Abingdonians

- 6.1. Positive contributions and interaction with the Schools or ASE's social media accounts are welcomed and Parents and OAs are encouraged to address any concerns directly with School or ASE rather than airing grievances on social media platforms.
- 6.2. Parents and guardians should seek to ensure their children adhere to school policies regarding social media usage and report any inappropriate behaviour or content to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (contact details in the [Safeguarding Policy](#)).
- 6.3. At School or ASE hosted events, parents should ensure that any personal photos or information posted is in accordance with the [Taking and Storage Images of Children](#) policy agreed to when their child joined the School. This normally means that permission should be sought from the Communication and Marketing Department before posting any photos taken on School premises or of our staff or pupils off the premises.

7. Guidance on social media use for students

- 7.1. Students' use of social media on any School managed devices and IT accounts and any personal devices (including handheld devices, watches or any other internet enabled devices) must comply with the student [ICT and E-Safety Policy](#).
- 7.2. Students must not access any social media that is for adults or if the student does not meet the minimum age requirement for the application or website.
- 7.3. Bad, including racist, sexist, bullying, explicit or violent language, emojis, memes and inappropriate pictures must never be included in messages or posts on social media.
- 7.4. Students must take responsibility for keeping details of their accounts private, using full privacy settings and logging off properly and not allowing others to use their accounts.
- 7.5. Students should report anything they see online that is offensive, upsetting or not in accordance with this policy to their Tutor, Head of House or DSL or use [Whisper](#).
- 7.6. It is a serious offence to use another person's account, or to create an account in another person's name without their consent. This includes impersonating the School or any other business or charity.

- 7.7. Students should not regard anything posted online as private, even that in private chatrooms or groups.
- 7.8. Students must not create any social media accounts using Abingdon or school names or its logos.

8. Recruitment

- 8.1. Online social media searches are conducted as part of the recruitment process (on shortlisted candidates) in accordance with the [Safer Recruitment Policy](#), [Policy on the Use of Online Searches in Pre-employment Checks](#) and KCSIE.

9. Breach of Policy & the Law

- 9.1. For staff and students, a breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action. For staff, action will be taken under the Staff Disciplinary procedure and for students under the School Rules and [student IT and E-safety](#) policy. Disciplinary action for staff applies only to directly employed staff. Non-employed members of staff, governors and volunteers put their work at the school at risk if they breach this policy.
- 9.2. Staff, parents, students, OAs and the Abingdon community are reminded that although there is no specific law in the United Kingdom which refers to social media alone, social media is protected by a number of laws such as the Malicious Communications Act of 1988, the Communications Act of 2003, and the Criminal Justice and Police Act of 2001. These laws all cover social media and other forms of electronic methods of communication including email. Under these laws it is illegal, and you are liable to prosecution, if you send indecent/grossly offensive messages, threats or false information with the intention of causing distress or anxiety to its receiver or receivers. You could face a fine or a prison sentence if found guilty.

If you have any questions, concerns or issues relating to the issues covered in this policy these should be addressed directly to the Director of Marketing and Communications communications@abingdon.org.uk.

Marketing and Communications Department

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