Mobile Phone and Social media Policy

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<th>Policy Reviewed:</th>
<th>Approved by Governing Body:</th>
<th>Date of the next review:</th>
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Introduction

Mobile phone technology has advanced significantly over the last few years - and it continues to evolve. Wireless connections in particular have extended the capabilities of mobile phones, enabling access to a wide range of new content and services globally. Many phones now offer Internet and email access, alongside the most often standard functions of messaging, camera, video and sound recording.

Woodlands School is committed to ensuring the safety of children in its care. We recognise the importance of mobile phones in school for communication purposes, but are aware that casual or inappropriate use of mobile phones in the School could pose a risk to children.

As with e-safety issues generally, risks to children and young people can be broadly categorised under the headings of content, contact and conduct and managed by reducing availability, restricting access and increasing resilience.

It is recognised that it is the enhanced functions of many mobile phones that cause the most concern, and which are most susceptible to misuse.
Misuse includes the taking and distribution of indecent images, exploitation and bullying.

It is also recognised that mobile phones can cause an unnecessary distraction during the working day and can be intrusive when used in the company of others. When mobiles phones are misused it can impact on an individual’s dignity, privacy and right to confidentiality. Such concerns are not exclusive to children and young people; hence there is a duty to protect the needs and vulnerabilities of all.

It is appreciated that it can be very difficult to detect when such devices are present or being used, particularly in relation to enhanced functions, such as cameras. The use of all mobile phones is therefore limited, regardless of their capabilities. The aim is to avoid distraction and disruption of the working day, and to minimise the opportunities for any individual to make any covert images or misuse functions in any other way. Social media websites are web-based technologies which allow people to interact through sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interests. Social media websites include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn. Other information media such as blogs and video and image sharing websites such as You Tube and Flickr are also covered by this policy. These sites are stated for illustrative purposes only and are not an exhaustive list.

The Council prohibits the use of Social Media websites for non-business purposes on council owned equipment (with the exception of some professional networking websites i.e. LinkedIn or Communities of Practice where restrictions are in place on their usage).

This policy applies to employees’ personal use i.e. not for work purposes; of social media websites, specifically outside of the workplace and in their own time on privately owned equipment.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure employees do not potentially bring the Council or the school into disrepute as a result of their personal usage on social media websites.

This policy applies to all employees of Harrow Council including Woodlands School staff, excluding recognised trade union representatives using social media websites in the course of their trade union duties. It is strongly recommended for the adoption by School Governing bodies following consultation with their staff and governing bodies are urged to adhere to the principles outlined within this policy.

**Aim**
The aim of the Mobile Phone Policy is to promote safe and appropriate practice through establishing clear and robust acceptable use guidelines.

Scope

This policy applies to all individuals who have access to personal or work-related mobile phones on site and covers both indoor and outdoor areas. This includes practitioners, volunteers, committee members, children, young people, parents, carers, visitors and community users. This list is not exhaustive. Failure to adhere to this policy may result in disciplinary action.

Staff personal mobile phones

- Staff will not carry personal mobile phones while working. This protects staff from being distracted from their work, and from allegations of inappropriate use. Their phones must be kept in identified secure locked areas e.g. staff locker or a cupboard in the class.
- If staff have a break time during their working hours, they may use their mobile phones during these times, in an agreed area not used by children e.g. in the office / staff room.
- If any staff members have a family emergency or similar and are required to keep their mobile phone to hand, prior permission must be sought from their line manager. Where it is essential for staff to make a personal call during a session, they must (with the agreement of their line manager) make this in the agreed area not used by children.
- Staff should give the school telephone number to their next of kin, in case it is necessary for the staff member to be contacted, in an emergency, during session hours.
- A mobile phone can be taken on school outings in accordance with the school Educational Visits Policy but this is to be used for emergency purposes only.
- It is the responsibility of all members of staff to be vigilant and report any concerns to their line manager, head teacher or the Designated Senior Leader for safeguarding.
- Concerns will be taken seriously, logged and investigated appropriately (see allegations against a member of staff policy).

Children

Children are not allowed to bring mobile phones into the school. If a child brings a mobile phone or a camera to school it needs to be taken away
and stored securely. Parents need to be informed and at the end of the
day the mobile phone will be either given to the school transport or
directly to parents.

**Visitors and parents/carers**

If a visitor or parent/carer is seen using their mobile phone they will be
respectfully requested not to use their mobile phones while on school
premises. Should phone calls and/or texts need to be taken or made, use
is restricted to those areas not accessed by children in order to avoid any
unnecessary disturbance or disruption to others.

Under no circumstances is **any** individual permitted to take images or
make recordings on a mobile phone without prior permission from the
head teacher.
Any individual bringing a personal device into the setting must ensure
that it contains no inappropriate or illegal content.

Parents that wish to share pictures of their **own** children on social media
must take full responsibility for this. **Under no circumstances should a
parent/carer share images via the internet of any other children from Woodlands school.** If a parent/carer does not adhere to this,
Woodlands school will have no choice but to contact the website and ask
for the removal of the images of the children.

**Photographs**

It is recognised that one of the key ways to support children’s
development, and engage parents in children’s learning, is through
photographs that record their children’s activities and achievements. We
will seek permission from parents/carers to take photographs of their
children for this purpose, using the school’s own cameras.

Practitioners are not permitted, in any circumstance to use their phones
for taking, recording or sharing images of children.

**Use of Social Media Websites**

Employees engaging in **personal use** of social media websites should
refrain from making reference to Woodlands School, Harrow Council, its
employees, its customers or suppliers, unless in the context of stating
what work they do or in discussing their specialism. In these
circumstances, a disclaimer must be included that ‘the views expressed
here are my own and do not necessarily represent the views of Harrow Council.

Employees must not post on websites entries/images/links that are derogatory, defamatory, discriminatory or offensive in anyway relating to colleagues, customers, other organisations or groups, which could bring Harrow Council or Woodlands School into disrepute.

Employees must not divulge confidential information about, or belonging to the school, colleagues, the council, its customers or suppliers on social media sites.

During the working day, employees should limit their personal use of social media websites to their own time e.g. lunch breaks and only on their own personal equipment e.g. smart phone.

Failure to adhere to this policy may result in disciplinary proceedings being taken against the employee under the school’s Code of Conduct Procedure. A serious breach of this policy such as serious bullying/discrimination may constitute gross misconduct and lead to summary dismissal.

If you are witness to anyone breeching this policy you must report it to the Head teacher or ICT co-ordinator immediately. If you have concerns about the Headteacher’s social media for personal use, please report to the governors immediately.

Disciplinary action may be taken regardless of whether the breach is committed during working hours, and regardless of whether the school’s or Council’s equipment or facilities are used for the purposes of committing the breach.

Staff may be required to remove internet postings which are deemed to constitute a breach of this policy. Failure to comply with such a request may in itself result in disciplinary action.

Employees should refer to the Harrow Social Media Protocol if using social media for work purposes.

- For the purposes of this policy all references to the school means Woodlands School.