

Social Media Policy

Stowe School
Independent Boarding and Day School for Boys and Girls



Social Media Policy

This policy is designed to protect employees, pupils and all users. This policy applies to the use of social media for both business and personal purposes, whether during School/working hours or otherwise. This policy applies regardless of whether the social media is accessed using School IT facilities and equipment or equipment belonging employees, pupils or any other IT/internet enabled equipment. Anyone setting up a social media account that is directly connected to Stowe School (using the name of Stowe School, a Stowe School logo, or clearly attached to Stowe School in some way) must follow all the guidelines in this policy. All colleagues and pupils must read, understand and sign the ICT Acceptable Use Policy.

The widespread availability and use of social media applications bring opportunities to understand, engage, and communicate in new, relevant and exciting ways. It is important that we are able to use these technologies and services effectively and flexibly. However, it is also important to ensure that we balance this with duties to the School, the community, our legal responsibilities and our reputation. The School's use of social networking applications has implications for our duty to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults. The policy requirements in this document aim to provide this balance to support innovation whilst providing a framework of good practice. They apply to all colleagues and pupils.

The purpose of the policy is to:

- Safeguard all pupils and promote wellbeing.
- Ensure users are not exposed to risk as a result of their actions.
- Use social media in a respectful, positive and productive way which respects all parties involved.
- Ensure that the reputation of Stowe School (the School), its employees and governors is protected and that stakeholders understand their ambassadorial role with regard to the School.
- Protect the School from legal risks.
- Ensure that any users are able clearly to distinguish where information provided via social media is legitimately representative of the School.

Social Media – Definitions

The School defines social media as 'any websites or applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking'. Social networking sites and tools include, but are not limited to, Facebook, X (formerly known as Twitter), Snapchat, TikTok, LinkedIn, Flickr, Vimeo, YouTube and Instagram. It also includes forums and discussion boards such as Yahoo! Groups or Google Groups, online encyclopaedias such as Wikipedia, and any other websites which allow individual users or organisations to use simple publishing tools. Many of the principles of this policy also apply to other types of online presence such as virtual worlds. All members of the School should bear in mind that information they share through social networking applications, even if they are on private spaces, may be subject to copyright, safeguarding and data protection legislation. They must also operate in line with other School policies.

School-Sanctioned Use of Social Media

School-sanctioned use of social media and/or social media accounts includes using the name of Stowe School, a Stowe School logo, or clearly an account attached to Stowe School in some way (for example, Stowe Sport, Stowe Music, Stowe Drama etc). There are many legitimate uses of social media within the curriculum, and to support pupil learning and to share news with the wider Stowe School community. For example, the School and departments of the School have official X (previously Twitter), TikTok, Instagram, LinkedIn and Facebook accounts and several A Level courses require the use of blogs for assessment. There are also many possibilities for using social media to enhance and develop pupils' learning and to keep the Stowe School Community and our supporters in touch with the School. When using School social media accounts and/or social media accounts using the name of Stowe School, a Stowe School logo, or clearly attached to Stowe School in some way, the following practices must be observed:

- The social media account must be approved by the Group Director of Marketing & Admissions and passwords must be shared with the Marketing Department.
- The content of any School-sanctioned social media site and/or social media accounts using the name of Stowe School, a Stowe School logo, or clearly attached to Stowe School in some way, should be entirely professional and should reflect well on the School.
- School sanctioned social media sites must use images of children in suitable clothing.
- Colleagues must take into account the Safeguarding Policy when making any posts on School social media accounts.
- Any links to external sites from the accounts must be appropriate and safe; if they are shared these must be verified as reputable sites. Only appropriate hashtags should ever be used.
- Any inappropriate comments on, or abuse of, School-sanctioned social media and/or social media accounts using the name of Stowe School, a Stowe School logo, or clearly attached to Stowe School in some way, should immediately be removed and reported to the Senior Deputy Head, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and the Marketing Department (if appropriate). It is the responsibility of everyone using the site and social media in general to report abuse immediately.

Staff using personal devices to capture images/film to post on School-sanctioned social media accounts should upload the image/film to the social media site, save the image to a School device/storage area (if keeping the image/film for archive purposes) and then delete the original image/film from their personal device, ensuring that the file is also deleted from their 'deleted items'.

Use of Social Media – Colleagues

The following outlines our code of conduct for colleagues when using social media, personally and professionally.

- Colleagues should not have 1:1 communication, including direct messaging (DM), with pupils through any social media, apart from via School email accounts, Teams Chat via a School account and School mobile devices for text messaging.
- Colleagues should not request or accept any current pupil of the School of any age or any ex-pupil of the School under the age of 21 as a friend, follower, subscriber or similar on any

personal social media account unless they are the parent of the pupil or a close family member.

- It is advisable that colleagues do not have personal contact with past pupils (above School age) other than via a School email account or the School social media accounts.
- Any communication received from current pupils on any personal social media sites should be reported to the DSL.
- If any colleague is aware of any inappropriate communications involving any pupil in any social media, these must immediately be reported to the DSL.
- Colleagues are advised, wherever possible, and where the social media site allows, to make sure their privacy settings on social media sites are set so that pupils cannot access information relating to their personal lives or follow them on their personal accounts.
- All email communication between employees and pupils of the School on School business must be made from an official School email account (any deviation from this in an emergency must be reported to the line manager).
- Colleagues should not use personal email accounts or personal mobile phones to make contact with pupils of the School, nor should any such contact be accepted, except in circumstances such as School trips or away matches that have been given prior approval.
- Colleagues should not post or publish on the internet or on any social networking site, any negative reference to the School, their colleagues, parents or pupils or discuss pupils or colleagues. Colleagues should consider the reputation of the School in any posts or comments related to the School on any social media accounts. Reputational breaches by colleagues are dealt with via the School's Code of Conduct Policy.
- Colleagues may like, share or make appropriate comment in response to the School's official social media accounts.
- Colleagues must not post images on any unofficial Stowe social media account that includes pupils, unless sharing posts made from a School official social media account. Colleagues are responsible for overseeing and monitoring any social media account attributed to their area of responsibility where the social media account is using the name of Stowe School, a Stowe School logo, or clearly attached to Stowe School in some way.
- Most common social networking sites are inherently insecure places to have discussions which contain any sensitive information. Privacy laws can be violated and the reputation of our School can be damaged if the public sees a discussion of any sensitive information taking place on social networking. Colleagues should be aware that these types of cases can result in disciplinary action.
- Colleagues should not share information which is confidential and proprietary about the School. This includes information about services, programmes, financial, strategy, and any other internal confidential, proprietary, or sensitive workplace information that has not been publicly released by the School. These are given as examples only and do not cover the range of what the School considers confidential and proprietary. If colleagues have any questions about whether information is proprietary, they must speak to their Line Manager or ELT member before releasing it. Colleagues must also be aware of the points made within their employment contract when they joined the School, a copy which can be obtained from the Group People team.
- The School's logo may not be used without explicit permission from the Marketing Department; the School owns the rights to all logos, mottos and phraseology and their usage.

Use of Social Media – Pupils

Pupils' use of social media on any School IT systems, School managed devices and School IT (Teams) accounts accessed at any time (including during online learning) and equipment/devices and any personal devices (including hand-held devices, watches or any other internet enabled device) brought on to the School site or at a School activity, must comply with the Pupils' ICT Acceptable Use Policy. In addition:

- Pupils must not access any social media that is for adults only or if the pupil does not meet the minimum age requirement.
- Anonymous sites must not be accessed as there is a high risk that inappropriate comments can be exchanged, causing distress or endangerment.
- Offensive, explicit or abusive, language and inappropriate pictures must never be included in messages.
- All messages should be positive and not include anything that could be upsetting or defamatory towards others.
- Pupils 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.
- Pupils must report anything offensive or upsetting that they see online to the appropriate bodies, either by using the Red Button on the VLE or by speaking to their parents or a member of staff.
- It is a serious offence to use another person's account, or to create an account in another person's name without their consent.
- Pupils should not regard anything posted online as private and should remember that harassment, defamatory attitudes and racism are just some issues which could lead to prosecution.
- An individual's "Digital Footprint" is becoming increasingly significant when it comes to job and university applications. If unfortunate decisions are made, it will be extremely difficult, perhaps impossible, to eliminate the evidence. Pupils should consider this when posting on social media.
- If pupils see inappropriate postings by other pupils, they must inform the School so that steps can be taken to avoid possible repercussions.
- [The Malicious Communications Act](#) applies to social media interaction by pupils, employees and parents of the School.
- Pupils must have permission from the relevant Houseparent or Head of Department for any social media accounts using the name of Stowe School, a Stowe School logo, or clearly attached to Stowe School in some way.

Use of Social Media – Parents

We welcome the positive contributions to our parents make to the School's social media, and ask our parents to:

- Please raise any concerns or issues about the School, its pupils or employees directly with the School and not on social media.
- Obtain permission before posting pictures that contain other parents or their children, unless sharing or liking a post from the School's official social media account or sharing images of friends or relations.

- Report any inappropriate use of social media by their own or other people's children, so that the School can work with our young people on safe and appropriate behaviour.
- Report inappropriate use of social media by other parents or School employees by informing the School so that steps can be taken to remedy the situation.

Related Policies

1. The Parent & Pupil Privacy Notices
2. The Digital Safety Policy
3. Staff Code of Conduct Policy
4. ICT Acceptable Use Policy