



Durham School

External Communication Policy

1. Policy Aims

1.1 Effective relationships between the School, its pupils, the parents, alumni, and the staff are critical to the School's success; these relationships are founded on clear, accurate, and timely communication. This policy seeks to ensure that all external communication is clear, consistent, positive, and aligned to other policies. The policy will ensure that staff understand the importance of external communication and the public perception of the School. The policy is essential to underpin the achievement of the School's strategic objectives.

2. Policy Statements

2.1 This policy relates to external communication regardless of the media and the audience. It covers verbal, written, electronic, pictorial and video communications

2.2 Communications can and will take a variety of forms: verbal, through face-to-face meetings or by telephone; written, through letters, notes in planners, InTouch, or messages and posts to pupils in Teams; occasionally, a communication may be received second hand or through an intermediary. Nevertheless, in the School's communication, the aim is to provide clear information that is consistent with the School's values and which represents the School to the highest standard.

2.3 Timely communication is essential to maintaining the positive relationships the School has with parents; parents understand that telephone calls during the day may not always be practical; nevertheless, alternatives do exist, and it is crucial that staff respond in an appropriately punctual way.

2.4 As a School, we have a duty to ensure that not only is the information we provide clear and accurate, but that all our communications with external parties reflect the high educational standards we aim to deliver as well as the values we hold. In light of this, checks and filters are put in place to ensure that all communication is consistent in terms of register, tone, as well as grammatical accuracy.

2.5 Digital communications by staff must be professional and respectful at all times and in accordance with the attached terms and conditions of use of social media. Staff will not use social media to infringe on the rights and privacy of others or to make ill-considered comments or judgements. School social media accounts must

not be used for personal gain. In using social media due consideration will be given to the copyright of content, confidentiality and data protection.

2.6 The School commits in this policy to observing the principles of the Equality Act 2010 and does not discriminate on any grounds.

3. Policy statements - Media Communications

3.1 This policy relates to external communication regardless of the media and the audience. It covers verbal, written, electronic, pictorial and video communications

3.2 It is an overriding principle that no employee may communicate externally about the performance of the School, policies or disclose other school information, without authority from the Headmaster, the Director with responsibility for Marketing or a member of the Senior Management Team.

3.3 It is the school policy to deal with the media in an open and honest manner. The School will be proactive to disseminate information to the media that will enhance the School reputation and help the public understand the value and role played by the School in the communities it serves.

3.4 Media relations will be managed efficiently and professionally to ensure that information about School services, policies, mission, strategic objectives and values are presented accurately, positively, frequently and in a balanced way and where relevant will use third party endorsement and comments in addition to those provided by the School.

3.5 All requests for information from the media will be passed immediately to the Head. Communications with the media will be conducted via the Head or an appointed spokesperson.

3.6 Stakeholders will be kept informed of policies, strategies and plans, through a variety of media including forums, newsletters and the web site. Stakeholders will be encouraged to make their opinions known to managers, about School policies, strategies and plans.

3.7 Strong working relationships with key opinion formers and decision makers, locally, regionally and nationally, are important and will be fostered through active participation in relevant groups and committees, regular meetings and contact, and through the supply of appropriate information.

4. Responsibilities

The Head is responsible for monitoring this policy and will provide reports and recommendations to the SMT and Governors as appropriate.

5. Links to other policies and documents

5.1 This policy is linked to the Staff ICT Acceptable Use Guidelines, the Adverse Weather Policy and the Parental Communication Policy.

6. Oversight

Oversight of the Communications Policy is undertaken by the Audit Committee. The policy will be reviewed at least once every three years.

Policy last reviewed by
Dr M P Alderson, Deputy Head [Staff]
05 May 2018
Mr A Pearson, Deputy Head [Academic]
16 November 2020



Durham School

Terms and Condition for the use of Social Media

Social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn) is a broad term for any kind of online platform which enables people to directly interact with each other.

Durham School recognises the numerous benefits and opportunities which a social media presence offers. Staff, parents/guardians and pupils are actively encouraged to find creative ways to use social media. However, there are some risks associated with social media use, especially around the issues of safeguarding, bullying and personal and the School's reputation. These terms and conditions aim to encourage the safe use of social media by Durham School, its staff, parents, guardians and pupils.

Scope

These terms and conditions are subject to the School's Codes of Conduct, Photographs and Photography Document and Acceptable Use Agreements.

These Terms and Conditions:

- Apply to all staff and to all social media communications which directly or indirectly, represent Durham School.
- Applies to such online communications posted at any time and from anywhere.
- Encourages the safe and responsible use of social media through training and education.
- Defines the monitoring of public social media activity pertaining to the School.

The School respects privacy and understands that staff and pupils may use social media forums in their private lives. However, personal communications likely to have a negative impact on professional standards and/or the School's reputation are within the scope of this document.

Professional communications are those made through official channels, posted on a School account or using the School name. All professional communications via social media are within the scope of this document.

Personal communications are those made via a personal social media accounts. In all cases, where a personal account is used which associates itself with the School or impacts on the School, it must be made clear that the member of staff is not communicating on behalf of the School with an appropriate disclaimer. Such personal communications are within the scope of this document.

Personal communications which do not refer to or impact upon the School are outside the scope of this document.

Digital communications with pupils are also considered. Staff may use social media to communicate with learners via a School social media account for teaching and learning purposes but must consider whether this is appropriate and consider the potential implications.

Responsibilities

Everyone who operates a School social media account or who uses their personal social media accounts at work has some responsibility for implementing this document.

However, these people have key responsibilities:

- The **Marketing Director** is ultimately responsible for ensuring that Durham School uses social media safely, appropriately and in-line with the School's objectives.

A list of accounts, and the staff member responsible, can be located in Common.

Process for creating new accounts

The School community is encouraged to consider if a social media account will help them in their work, e.g. a history department Twitter account, or a "Friends of the School" Facebook page. Anyone wishing to create such an account must present a business case to the Marketing Director which covers the following points: -

- The aim of the account.
- The intended audience.
- How the account will be promoted.
- Who will run the account (at least two staff members should be named).

Following consideration by the Marketing Director, an application will be approved or rejected. In all cases, the Marketing Director must be satisfied that anyone running a social media account on behalf of the School has read and understood this document and received appropriate training. This also applies to anyone who is not directly employed by the School, including volunteers or parents.

- Any password changes should be sent to the Marketing Director within 24 hours.

Monitoring

School accounts must be monitored regularly and frequently throughout term time (messages checked daily, at least two post per week). Any comments, queries or complaints made through those accounts must be responded to within 24 hours (or on the next working day if received at a weekend) even if the response is only to acknowledge receipt. Regular monitoring and intervention is essential in case a situation arises where bullying or any other inappropriate behaviour arises on a School social media account. Complaints must be reported to the Marketing Manager.

Behaviour

- The School requires that all users using social media adhere to the standard of behaviour as set out in this document and other relevant policies.
- Digital communications by staff must be professional and respectful at all times and in accordance with this document. Staff will not use social media to infringe on the rights and privacy of others or make ill-considered comments or judgments about staff. School social media accounts must not be used for

personal gain. Staff must ensure that confidentiality is maintained on social media even after they leave the employment of the School.

- Users must declare who they are in social media posts when using shared accounts (i.e. end message with initials). Anonymous posts are discouraged in relation to School activity.
- Unacceptable conduct, (e.g. defamatory, discriminatory, offensive, harassing content or a breach of data protection, confidentiality, copyright) will be considered extremely seriously by the School and will be reported as soon as possible to the Headmaster, and escalated where appropriate.
- The use of social media by staff, while at work, may be monitored, in line with School policies. The School permits reasonable and appropriate access to private social media sites. However, where excessive use is suspected, and considered to be interfering with relevant duties, disciplinary action may be taken.
- The School will take appropriate action in the event of breaches of the social media document. Where conduct is found to be unacceptable, the School will deal with the matter internally. Where conduct is considered illegal, the School will report the matter to the police and other relevant external agencies, and may take action according to the disciplinary document.

Legal considerations

- Users of social media should consider the copyright of the content they are sharing and, where necessary, should seek permission from the copyright holder before sharing.
- Users must ensure that their use of social media does not infringe upon relevant data protection laws, or breach confidentiality.

Handling abuse

- When acting on behalf of the School, handle offensive comments swiftly and with sensitivity.
- If a conversation turns and becomes offensive or unacceptable, School users should block, report or delete other users or their comments/posts and should inform the audience exactly why the action was taken.
- If you feel that you or someone else is subject to abuse by colleagues through use of a social networking site, then this action must be reported using the agreed School protocols.

Tone

The tone of content published on social media should be appropriate to the audience, whilst retaining appropriate levels of professional standards. Key words to consider when composing messages are:

- Engaging
- Conversational
- Informative
- Friendly (on certain platforms, e.g. Facebook)

Use of images

School use of images can be assumed to be acceptable, providing the following guidelines are strictly adhered to.

- Permission to use any photos or video recordings should be sought in line with the School's photograph and photography document. If anyone, for any reason, asks not to be filmed or photographed then their wishes should be respected.
- Under no circumstances should staff share or upload pupils' pictures online other than via School owned social media accounts.

- Staff should exercise their professional judgement about whether an image is appropriate to share on School social media accounts. Pupils' should be appropriately dressed, not be subject to ridicule and must not be on any School list of children whose images must not be published.
- If a member of staff inadvertently takes a compromising picture which could be misconstrued or misused, they must delete it immediately.

Personal use

- Staff
 - Where excessive personal use of social media in School is suspected, and considered to be interfering with relevant duties, disciplinary action may be taken.
 - The School permits reasonable and appropriate access to private social media sites.