Tips for staff
using social media

eSafety Toolkit for Schools
Creating safer online environments
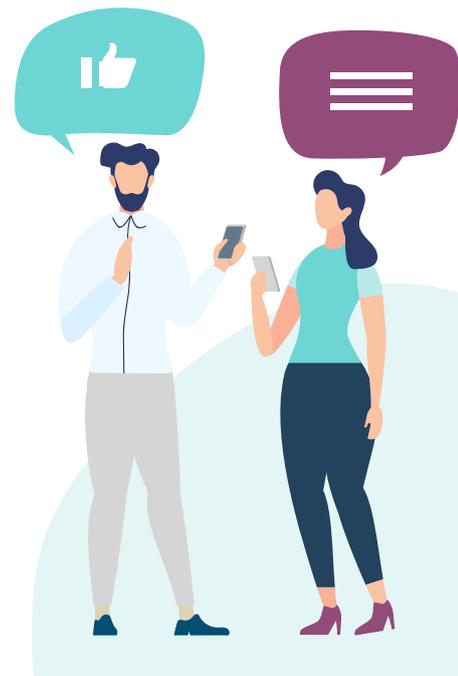
This tip sheet provides guidance for staff on using social media for:

• professional/official school-related purposes

• personal activities.

It should be read in conjunction with education department, sector or school-based policies that outline the behavioural expectations of all teaching and non-teaching staff when using social media, and protective practices in interactions between staff and students.

It's important for all staff to follow procedures, codes of conduct and employment contracts. Staff are encouraged to seek advice from their school leadership team, education union representative or education sector if in doubt about the appropriateness of online conduct and/or to report the unprofessional behaviour of colleagues.

Tips for professional social media use

- At school, social media is best used for educational purposes or for organising co-curricular activities. Communication and content should reflect professional staff/student or staff/parent/carer relationships.

- At least two members of staff should have access to any school-authorised social media account, including a member of the school leadership team.

- Staff should only use school-authorised accounts or platforms when corresponding with students and parents/carers. Avoid using personal accounts.

- Posts should be positive and professional. Staff need to think twice before posting, and check posts with a trusted colleague to help with tone and editing.

- Confidential, proprietary or privileged information about other staff, students, parents/carers, or school projects, policies or finances should never be posted or published.

- Student information should not be posted online (including names, videos, photos or work samples) without the written permission of the school, student and parent/carer.

- If approached by a student or parent/carer with concerns about inappropriate content or misconduct on school social media, staff need to deal with it promptly, following school and education sector policies, if applicable.

- Staff in doubt about professional social media use should ask for guidance from a school leader.

Tips for personal social media use

Staff need to:

- Maintain professional boundaries on social media and avoid accepting or requesting students or parents/carers as 'friends'. This includes recent ex-students who may still be connected to current students. Be prepared with an appropriate response when a student or parent/carer asks to connect on any social media or gaming site.

- Avoid sharing personal mobile numbers or communicating with students and parents/carers using personal social media or email accounts.

- Never exchange personal images with students and avoid storing images of, or information about, students on personal devices. Never post images of students on personal accounts. Check to see whether there are sector guidelines about storing student images.

- Enable two factor authentication on all social media and email accounts. Avoid logging into personal accounts on school devices or using personal devices during class time. Remember: if you can't avoid logging in, make sure you log out of your accounts every time.

- Note that students and parents/carers may search for staff online, so it is important to consider your personal online presence (including the use of your real name) and to adjust privacy settings. Consider establishing separate accounts for personal and professional use, and keeping personal accounts in private mode.

- Avoid including workplace or work contact details on social media profiles. Listing your school as a place of work on a social media profile that is public may increase the likelihood of being identified by students and parents/carers. It might also link a personal online profile with the school.

- Check that public interactions (likes, photos, posts) align with the ethos of the school. Be aware of guidelines and policies set by employers and model responsible and respectful conduct online.

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- Remember that profile pictures are usually visible regardless of privacy settings. Consider deleting old posts and pictures. Deactivate old accounts or request that content is deleted from certain sites if needed, noting that some content may remain public regardless of settings.

- Refrain from criticising colleagues, students, their parents/carers, school management or education sector online (whether using real names or pseudonyms). Remember that even if a profile is set to private, comments or posts may be visible to others, or copied and passed on.

- Avoid using school logos, trademarks or other intellectual property on social media, or making comments on behalf of the school without express content to do so.

Tips for classroom social media use, video sharing and online collaboration platforms

Staff need to:

- Be familiar with the school's online safety and mobile device usage policies.

- Make online behavioural expectations clear to students. Teach students online safety skills and communication protocols. Model good practice when using technology in the classroom.

- Consider co-designing acceptable use agreements with students to set expectations for online behaviour.

- If a student is presenting to a class, remember to preview images, videos, website links, social media content and PowerPoint slides beforehand to check for appropriateness.

- Refrain from posting examples of student work, exam responses or anecdotes from students without permission from the student and parent/carer.

- Preview social media content for appropriateness and ensure it is approved by school leadership when using social media in the classroom.

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