



Stella Maris School

Social Media Policy

Updated: Sept. 2025
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Stella Maris School is committed to Safeguarding and promoting the welfare and well-being of all members of the school. All school staff and volunteers who work in the school are expected to share this commitment and vision.

This Policy was written in consultation with the Trustees, Headteacher and the staff of Stella Maris School with due regard to our mission statement.

“At Stella Maris we endeavour to put the children at the centre of everything we do. Our mission is to educate, nurture and instil traditional values and cherish our children. We inspire them to achieve their best in every aspect of their lives.”

Stella Maris Social Media Policy

Stella Maris School recognises that Social Media can be a fantastic tool for communicating and sharing but it can put a lot of pressure on young people and at worst can be a danger to anyone using it.

As a school we are aware that increasing numbers of children and adults are using social networking sites and it is a common part of everyday life. However, we are concerned that misuse of this tool where formative minds have easy access to inappropriate materials at an early age can damage young minds and create a situation where children are vulnerable.

As educators we endeavour to teach our children how to use technology wisely and safely and help parents to see the dangers that can present themselves when children are using technology in their homes.

The most commonly used sites are Instagram, Facebook and Twitter, although new trends and sites are increasingly being added to these popular sites.

The widespread availability and use of social networking bring opportunities to understand, engage and communicate with audiences in new ways. It is important that we teach our children how to use these technologies and services effectively and utilise them for positive reasons. However, it is also important to ensure that we adopt a balanced approach and children and staff are aware of the dangers associated on many levels with the whole aspect of social media.

This Social Media Policy and associated guidance is to protect the school and advise school staff and management on how to deal with potential inappropriate use of social networking sites. It is our duty to safeguard the children and all staff working at Stella Maris School. This Social Media Policy aims to provide the balance to support innovative thinking and advances in technology whilst providing a framework of good practice for all members of our school community to follow.

AIMS

The purpose of this Social Media Policy is to ensure:

- That the school is not exposed to legal risks
- That the reputation of the school is not adversely affected
- That our school users (children and staff) can clearly distinguish where information provided via social networking applications is legitimately representative of the school

We are aware that children who are not age-appropriate to use these social networking sites may have access to social media sites in the homes and we incorporate advice and recommendation into our E-safety lessons to combat this and educate children in this area.

Facebook is targeted at older teenagers and adults and have a no person under 13 registration policy and recommend parental guidance for 13 to 16 year olds.

The following are extracts from Facebook privacy policy:

"If you are under age 13, please do not attempt to register for Facebook or provide any personal information about yourself to us. If we learn that we have collected personal information from a child under the age of 13, we will delete that information as quickly as possible. If you believe that we might have any information from a child under age 13, please contact us"

The school is happy to provide materials, website recommendations and advice to any parents who need help in talking to their children about safe internet use.

This Social Media Policy covers the use of social networking applications by all school stakeholders, including, Staff, Trustees and Pupils.

The requirements of this Policy apply to all uses of social networking applications which are used for any school related purpose and regardless of whether the School representatives are contributing in an official capacity to social networking applications provided by external organisations.

Social networking applications include, but are not limited to:

Blogs,

Online discussion forums, e.g. netmums.com

Collaborative spaces, e.g. Facebook

Media sharing services, e.g. YouTube

'Micro-blogging' applications, e.g. Twitter

All Staff and Pupils should bear in mind that information they share through social networking applications, even if they are on private spaces, are still subject to copyright, data protection and Freedom of Information legislation, the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 and other legislation.

They must also operate in line with the School's Equality and Diversity Policy.

Use of Social Networking Sites in Worktime

Use of social networking applications in work time for personal use only is not permitted, unless permission has been given by the Headteacher for reasons connected to the promotion of the school.

Social Networking as part of School Service

All proposals for using social networking applications as part of a school service (whether they are hosted by the school or by a third party) must be approved by the Headteacher.

Use of social networking applications which are not related to any school services does not need to be approved by the Headteacher.

However, school representatives must still operate in line with the requirements set out within the Policy.

School representatives must adhere to the following Terms of Use. The Terms of Use below apply to all uses of social networking applications by all school representatives. This includes, but is not limited to, public facing applications such as open discussion forums and internally-facing uses such as project blogs, regardless of whether they are hosted on the school network or not.

Where applications allow the posting of messages online, users must be mindful that the right to freedom of expression attaches only to lawful conduct. Stella Maris School expects that users of social networking applications will always exercise the right of freedom of expression with due consideration for the rights of others and strictly in accordance with these Terms of Use.

Terms of Use and Guidance for Staff

Social Networking applications:

- Must not be used to publish any content which may result in actions for defamation, discrimination, breaches of copyright, data protection or other claim for damages or bring the name of Stella Maris School into disrepute.
- Must not be used to promote individual financial interests or such ventures
- Must not be used in an abusive or disrespectful manner
- Must not be used for actions that would put any members of the school in breach of the Staff Code of Conduct or other policies relating to safeguarding
- Must not breach the school's Behaviour Policy relating to anti-bullying
- Must not be used to discuss any matters relating to school business or relate to staff, pupils or parents
- No staff member of Stella Maris School should have a pupil as a 'friend' or communicate with any pupil on a social networking site
- Employees should not identify themselves as a representative of Stella Maris School when on their personal social media sites and no mention should be made of matters relating to school business
- It is advised that staff should not be communicating on social media sites with parents of children currently in the school
- Staff should be aware that if their out-of-work activity causes potential embarrassment for Stella Maris School or detrimentally affects the reputation of the school as an employer then the employer is entitled to take disciplinary action
- Where family and friends have pupils in school and there are legitimate family links, please make this known to the management of the school

However, it would not be appropriate to network during the working day on school equipment.

Violation of this Social Media Policy will be considered as GROSS MISCONDUCT and can result in disciplinary action being taken against the employee up to and including termination of employment.

It is illegal for an adult to network, giving their age and status as a child.

- If you have any evidence of pupils or adults using social networking sites during the working day, please contact the DSLs, Mrs N. Johnson or Mr K. Brown and immediate action will be taken

Guidance/protection for Pupils on using social networking

- No pupil in our school should be accessing social networking sites as they are under 13 years of age. There is a mechanism on Facebook where pupils can be reported via the Help screen

http://www.facebook.com/help/contact.php?show_form=underage

- No pupil may access social networking sites during the school day
- Pupils are not allowed to bring mobile phones and other personal devices into school. (Please see our E-safety Policy for guidelines.)
- No pupil should attempt to join a staff member's areas on networking sites. If pupils attempt to do this, the member of staff must inform the Headteacher immediately and parents will be informed, as this is a potential safeguarding matter
- No school computers are to be used to access social networking sites at any time of day, unless for direct school use and under the supervision of a class teacher.
- Any attempts to breach firewalls will result in a ban from using school ICT equipment in line with the user agreements which all children have signed.
- Please report any improper contact or cyber bullying to the class teacher in confidence, as soon as it happens, and it will be brought to the attention of the DSL and Headteacher.
- We have a policy of zero tolerance to cyber bullying and all other forms of bullying at Stella Maris School.

Child Protection Guidance

If the Headteacher receives a disclosure that an adult employed by the school is using a social networking site in an inappropriate manner as detailed above they should:

- Record the disclosure in line with their Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Schools must refer the matter to the LADO who will investigate via the Greater Manchester Police Child Protection Team
- If the disclosure has come from a parent, take normal steps to calm the parent and explain our processes
- If a disclosure comes from a member of staff, try to maintain confidentiality
- The LADO will advise whether the member of staff should be suspended pending investigation after contact with the police and it is not recommended that action is taken until advice has been given
- If a disclosure is from a child, follow your normal process in your Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, until the police investigation has been carried out

Cyber Bullying

By adopting the recommended no use of social networking sites on school premises, Stella Maris School protects themselves from accusations of complicity in any cyber bullying through the provision of access.

Parents should be clearly aware of this school policy. It will be on the website and they are advised to read it at their convenience.

Where a disclosure of bullying is made, schools now have the duty to investigate and protect, even where the bullying originates outside the school.

We recognise that even in a school as small and caring as Stella Maris School, children will experience a whole range of differing family attitudes towards what is considered appropriate exposure to social media and what is not.

Many of our children have older siblings so may potentially have higher exposure to social media and social networking sites in their homes.

Due to the complexity of this area we have listed some examples of scenarios which could happen.

EXAMPLE 1:

- A pupil is receiving taunts on Facebook and abusive texts from an ex-pupil who moved from the school three months ago: This is not a school responsibility, but in a good practice scenario the Headteacher or Designated Safeguarding Leads will contact the new school to make them aware of the situation, as this could become a child protection issue.

EXAMPLE 2:

- A pupil is receiving taunts from peers or other children in the school. It is all happening at weekends and the perpetrator/s are using Facebook or texts. In this case, even though the abuse is happening outside of school the school has a duty of care to investigate and work with the families to resolve the situation and adjust these behaviours.
- Once a disclosure is made, investigation will have to involve the families. This should be dealt with under the school's Anti-Bullying Policy.
- If parent / carers refuse to engage and bullying continues, it can be referred to the police as harassment.
- This guidance can also apply to text and mobile phone cyber bullying.
- If a parent/carer is making threats on-line against a member of school staff – this is counted as bullying. The member of staff must inform the Headteacher immediately and the parent/carer will be spoken to in the first instance. Should the situation not be resolved, the police will be notified.

It is the expectation of the Management of Stella Maris School that all staff, pupils, trustees and others associated with the school will adhere to this policy and report any wrongdoing to the Headteacher or the Designated Safeguarding Leads.

We recognise that as our children grow up and move to senior schools we can never completely stop young people from using social media, nor should we try to do this.

What is required is a common-sense approach from an early age so that children are empowered to make informed choices when they grow up and prevent social media and networking from consuming every aspect of their lives.

If educators and parents work together and establish good practice the positive side of technology and social media will be embedded in a child's education and become a skill for life.