



SURBITON

HIGH SCHOOL

Social Media

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1 Surbiton High School: Aims and Ethos

Surbiton High School aims to **inspire, encourage and empower** all its students to discover and embrace their individual talents, within United Learning's core mission to bring out "the best in everyone". We combine an intellectually rigorous academic environment with outstanding pastoral care and outstanding co-curricular opportunities; through this provision, we encourage our students to live out our **School values**, and become compassionate, respectful, courageous, and inquisitive members of the community.

Our Values

We are compassionate:

We are kind and we care, in both thought and action. We consider those less fortunate and strive to support and offer aid. We are mindful of the gentle power of positive actions. We support and encourage those around us, living out the School's motto: *Amor nos semper ducat* (May love always lead us).

We are respectful:

We respect all people equally. We respect ourselves, our learning, our community, our environment, and the planet we all share. We strive to act with respect and integrity in all things. When we disagree, we do so respectfully.

We are courageous:

When challenged by our fears we are determined, not deterred. We call on resilience for strength when in the heat of the struggle. We bravely chase our dreams and fight for what we believe. When we fall, we pick ourselves up and forge forward.

We are inquisitive:

We understand that a thoughtful question is the key to unlock understanding. We believe where answers provide ends, questions pose exciting beginnings. We are eager to explore, we question to discover, we are curious to learn more of the world at large.

We are a community:

We are united - with a common focus. We value belonging to a wider community: our school community, our local community, our global community. We are inclusive of all, no matter our differences. We value and nurture the connections we form.

United Learning and the United Church Schools' Trust

Surbiton High School is part of *United Learning* and the *United Church Schools' Trust*. The School has an Anglican foundation, valuing its Christian heritage whilst welcoming staff and children from all faiths and none. We share with United Learning its core mission statement "to bring out the best in everyone". We are committed to the aims of United Learning, including its *Framework for Excellence*, which can be found at: www.unitedlearning.org.uk



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2 Introduction

This policy statement is intended to serve as guidance for staff and pupils of Surbiton High School and extends to anyone working within the School and using the School's systems and equipment.

The policy and principles below are aimed at helping staff and individuals avoid the negatives of using social media.

The prevalence of social media provides opportunities for individuals to engage, interact, understand, and communicate with one another in new and exciting ways.

While recognising some of the benefits of these media as opportunities for communication, this policy sets out the principles that Surbiton High School staff, pupils and contractors are expected to follow when using social media.

It is crucial that pupils, parents, and the public at large have confidence in the School's decisions and services. The principles set out in this policy statement are designed to ensure that members of the School community use social media responsibly so that confidentiality of pupils and staff and the reputation of the School are safeguarded.

This policy statement also aims to help staff use social media with minimal professional risk. Pupils and staff members must always be conscious of the need to keep their personal and school lives separate and should not put themselves in a position where there is a conflict between their work for the School and their personal interests.

3 Scope

This policy applies to all pupils as well as teaching and support staff, whether employed directly by the School or staff trainees and other trainees, volunteers and other individuals who provide services on behalf of the School. These individuals are collectively referred to as 'members of the School community' in this policy.

This policy covers personal use of social media as well as the use of social media for official School purposes, including sites hosted by and maintained on behalf of either.

This policy applies to any means of electronic communication software, including but not limited to, social networking sites such as Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, TikTok, LinkedIn, blogs and microblogs such as X, anonymous feedback sites such as chat rooms, forums, podcasts, open access online encyclopaedias such as Wikipedia, social bookmarking sites such as del.icio.us and content sharing sites such as Flickr and YouTube etc.

The internet is fast-paced technology, and it is impossible to cover all circumstances or emerging media. The principles set out in this policy must be adhered to across all social media channels irrespective of the medium.



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4 Legal Framework

All individuals working on behalf of United Learning are bound by a legal duty of confidence and other laws to protect the confidential information they have access to during the course of their work. Disclosure of confidential information on social media is likely to be a breach of several laws and professional codes of conduct, including:

- Human Rights Act 1998;
- Common law duty of confidentiality
- Data Protection Act 1998.

Confidential information includes, but is not limited to:

- Person-identifiable information, e.g., pupil and employee records protected by the Data Protection Act 1998 and 2018
- Information divulged in the expectation of confidentiality
- School or United Learning business or corporate records containing organisationally or publicly sensitive information
- Any commercially sensitive information such as information relating to commercial proposals or current negotiations
- Politically sensitive information.

Staff members should also be aware that other laws relating to libel, defamation, harassment, and copyright may apply to information posted on social media, including:

- Communications Act 2003
- Copyright Act 1988.
- Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994
- Defamation Acts 1952, 1996 and 2013
- Equality Act 2010
- Libel Act 1843
- Online Safety Act 2023
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997

Schools and United Learning could be held vicariously responsible for the acts of their employees during their employment. For example, staff members who harass co-workers online or who engage in cyberbullying or discrimination on the grounds of protected characteristics such as race, sex, disability, etc or who defame a third party while at work may render the School and United Learning liable to the injured party.

5 School-sanctioned use of social media

The School maintains presences on various social media channels, predominantly X, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube and Instagram. These provide effective additional channels of communication with parents/carers, staff, pupils, United Learning and the wider community.

For example, Instagram is used to collate and publicise a stream of relevant messages about the multitude



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of activities that go on at Surbiton High School every day. Some staff have chosen to play a part in this use of social media for professional purposes, often to highlight successes and to encourage participation in their area of work (although the Principal will want to apply his discretion to who he permits to do this). This is not without risk, however, and staff members should be aware that:

- social media channels are in the public domain and are regularly used by journalists, pupils, parents and employers
- submissions can take on a life of their own once sent by users and it is not always possible to fully delete incorrect information once it is in the wider domain
- the School and United Learning may re-message the submissions of staff members to their respective wider audience
- they must follow the permissions and GDPR guidelines for use of pupil imagery and use of names on social media accounts.

New social media accounts must not be set up across any platform unless they approved by the Communications Team.

6 Policy statements

Staff members must not upload video content to hosting services, such as YouTube, without sign off from the appropriate delegated leader. This is for reasons of safeguarding and for maintaining the reputation of the School and United Learning. Likewise, staff members must not make use of any social media service with pupils unless a pedagogical business case and associated risk assessment is agreed.

Staff members should maintain a professional persona through any use of social media for work purposes. Usernames should be formal (e.g., @MrSmith_SchoolName) or anonymised (e.g., @PE_SchoolName). The latter option also distances the user from their real life identify and makes online bullying less likely.

All professional submissions to social media sites must show the School/United Learning in a positive light and should be written without ambiguity or any rhetorical device (such as sarcasm) which might be misinterpreted.

Staff members must be careful when entering into dialogue on social media, which the School and United Learning are using purely as a one-way channel for distributing news. Any attempt by other users to interact with staff members via such services for the purposes of discussion should be reported to the appropriate delegated leader for advice and resolution. The simplest option is usually to take such issues offline. Even the simple act of responding to a pupil's messaged question confirms that pupil attends the School, links to their wider digital identity and photographs of them and does so in a purposefully public forum.

Staff members should exercise professional judgement when using social media. It is good practice to ask a senior colleague's opinion before posting an update to a social media service. If in doubt over the appropriateness of a submission, the best option is not to make it. Appropriate disciplinary action could be taken should a member of staff make a submission which brings the School or United Learning into disrepute.

Staff should not share any information which is confidential about the School. This includes sensitive workplace information such as financial, admissions, HR or strategic initiatives and data etc.



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Any images submitted to a social media site should be chosen carefully and should show the School positively. Images of pupils must only be uploaded with exceptional caution. No image which might reasonably be judged to cause embarrassment to the pupil should be published. 'Over the shoulder' images (where individuals are not recognisable) or group shots of 3 or more pupils are safest. Staff should seek advice from a senior colleague before publishing images of pupils wearing PE kit.

Images of individual staff should only be uploaded with their consent and no image which might reasonably be judged to cause embarrassment to the member of staff should be published. Only images of pupils for whom the School has permission to use may be uploaded. Those pupils who cannot be photographed are referenced on iSAMS.

Individual pupils should not be identifiable through submissions to social media sites, for safeguarding reasons. For example, "Excellent piece of History work shown here by Lucy in Y8" is acceptable, whereas including Lucy's surname is not. It is also acceptable to refer to pupils using the format name + first initial of the surname (for Senior School pupils only), for example "Well done, Lucy S".

Strong password security must be maintained and regularly changed for any social media account, to prevent it from being hijacked and misused. Passwords should never be written down. A combination of uppercase and lowercase characters should be combined with numerals. The potential for hi-jacked accounts to bring the School and United Learning into disrepute is significant and responsibility for account security lies with the staff member who controls it. Staff should be cognisant that such accounts are likely to be targeted by pupils for precisely this purpose.

Passwords for School social media accounts must be shared with the Communications Team so that the account can be accessed by the School should it be necessary to update/amend or delete an inappropriate message.

7 Personal use of social media

It is reasonable for members of staff to maintain personal web presences in their lives beyond their school life. School staff, however, occupy an almost unique professional position due to their work with children and the moral credibility they must maintain. There have been several recent cases where school staff have suffered serious professional consequences as a result of poor judgement in the use of social media.

It is worth considering that information (text, images, video) held in web presences:

- is never completely private and can very easily enter the public domain
- can be misinterpreted by audiences it was not originally intended for
- may persist beyond your wishes
- might be copied and used by third parties without consent

It is therefore vital that use of social media in the life of members of staff beyond the School be totally separated from their professional identity. However, staff should be aware that even if this separation is strictly adhered to, it remains relatively easy for people (pupils, journalists, future employers etc.) to connect staff in schools with 'private' social media presences. We would recommend staff adhere to the highest levels of privacy to protect their own accounts.



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8 Policy statements

Staff members may only identify themselves as working at the School on platforms where they are maintaining a professional stance such as X, LinkedIn and professional blogging sites. However, it must be made clear that their views are their own and do not represent those of the organisation. On all other social media sites such as Instagram, YouTube and Facebook, staff members must not identify themselves as employees of the School/United Learning in their personal web presences or purport to represent the views of either organisation. This is to prevent information on these sites from being linked with the School/ United Learning and to safeguard the privacy of staff members, particularly those involved in providing pastoral support. Do not name the School/United Learning in any biographical detail associated with personal accounts or use their logos or any other identifying information (such as location).

Staff members must be mindful of contact with any pupil or member of a pupil's family through any personal social media channels unless the pupil is a family member. Staff must maintain levels of professionalism at all times. Staff should avoid specifically befriending pupils or pupils' family on social media channels such as Facebook where an individual can be tagged in photos and messages which then expose the content to wider audiences within your network. Professional networks such as LinkedIn remain less of an issue as long as professionalism is maintained at all times.

Staff members must be careful of contact through any personal social medium with any pupil or member of a pupil's family, whether from their school or any other school, unless the pupils are family members. Even being linked to the children of colleagues/ close personal friends carries risks, as many services such as Facebook allow user data to be visible to friends of friends. For example, that photograph of Friday night at the end of term could, once commented on or liked by one of your direct contacts (i.e. the second party) be visible by multiple third parties over whom you have no control.

Staff members must decline 'friend requests' from pupils which they receive to their personal social media accounts for at least 12 months after a pupil has finished at the School and once the pupil is over 18 years of age. Exceptions to this include roles where contact is required and a part of the remit such as Head of Development and Alumni and Director of Sixth Form. For other members of staff, if they receive such requests from pupils who are not family members, they should discuss these in general terms in class and signpost pupils to become 'friends' of the official School social media accounts including Facebook, X, Instagram, LinkedIn etc.

On leaving the School's/United Learning's service, staff members must not initiate contact with former pupils by means of personal social media sites whilst that pupil is under the age of 18.

Staff members must not initiate contact with former pupils by means of personal social media sites whilst that pupil is under the age of 18 or in full time secondary or 16 to 19 education. If the former pupil has family and/or social media friends in their School, they should also refrain from initiating contact with former pupils by means of personal social media sites.

Information staff members have access to as part of their employment, including personal information about pupils and their family members, colleagues and other parties must not be discussed on their personal web presence.

Staff members should not put themselves in a position where extreme political, religious, or philosophical



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views expressed via social media conflict with those of a public institution such as a school. Even if separation of professional and private lives has been maintained, recent case history shows that staff who express such views have found their position at a school to be untenable. This information is now easier to find as it is possible to search Facebook for example, by likes, affiliation and places of employment.

Staff members should not use social media to document or distribute evidence of activities in their private lives that may bring the School or United Learning into disrepute. Even if separation of professional and private lives has been maintained, recent case history shows that staff whose behaviour becomes known through social media have found their position at school to be compromised.

School email addresses and other official contact details must not be used for setting up personal social media accounts or to communicate through such media.

Staff members must not edit open access online encyclopaedias such as Wikipedia in a personal capacity from work. This is because the source of the edit will be recorded as the employer's IP address and the intervention will, therefore, appear as if it comes from the employer itself.

Caution is advised when inviting work colleagues to be 'friends' in personal social networking sites. Social networking sites blur the line between work and personal lives, and it may be difficult to maintain professional relationships, or it might be just too embarrassing if too much personal information is known in the workplace.

Staff members must not use social media and the internet in any way to attack, insult, abuse or defame pupils, their family members, colleagues, other professionals, other organisations, or the school/United Learning.

Staff members are strongly advised to ensure that they set the privacy levels of their personal sites to be as strict as possible and to opt out of public listings on social networking sites to protect their own privacy.

To summarise, your behaviour on social media is subject to the same standards as workplace conduct and as such employees should:

- not post or share content that could reasonably be viewed as bringing the School into disrepute, including offensive, racist, discriminatory, or inappropriate material or illegal activities.
- not use social media to vent frustrations about work, colleagues, parents, or pupils - even indirectly or anonymously. Posts that incite harm, violence, or harassment are strictly prohibited.
- not post about school policies, incidents, safeguarding matters, or anything relating to pupils or staff.
- avoid becoming involved in discussions or controversial debates that could escalate or reflect poorly on you as a representative of the School.
- maintain a completely personal profile, where possible, that is not easily identifiable as linked to the school.

Your online presence can be interpreted as a reflection of your professional role. Being thoughtful and cautious protects both you and the school. Failure to comply may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal under the United Learning Disciplinary Policy.



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9 The Role of Staff with student use of school social media

The information below outlines the School's expectations of pupils in regard to social media. Staff should be aware of these expectations, in order that they can represent the School's view with pupils.

The School does not endorse student use of any social media platform. However, if social media is used by students, they must ensure they keep their account details private and secure.

They are not permitted to set up accounts under the Surbiton High School name or use the School logo in any circumstances. Use of the School logo (including the crest without the name) is a serious issue and will be taken up internally with the Head of Year and Principal, where necessary.

Students should not post anything online that is offensive, upsetting, abusive or inappropriate. They should not use photos or videos of other students without their consent. Any use of social media that relates to the School should be positive and not include anything that could be defamatory towards the School or others. Digital footprints are very difficult to erase, and students should therefore be mindful of everything that they do post online.

Students must not use social media on any school equipment and should not access social media platforms that have age restrictions where the student does not meet the set age restrictions.

If a student sees inappropriate posts on social media by other pupils they should report them, first to the student's own parents and secondly to the School. If they see anything that is offensive or upsetting, they should report the content through the platform where they have seen it and speak to a trusted adult to raise their concerns.

In exceptional circumstances, specific students have been given the use of certain social media accounts for the Sixth Form and Houses. The content for these is overseen by the Director of Marketing, Communications & Admission, Director of Sixth Form and Director of Houses & Social Enterprise. This has arisen to provide leadership opportunities for pupils, and they have received training on expectations and submission of all passwords to the Communications Team to ensure anything sensitive can be deleted. This is closely monitored, and students must follow all other guidance as laid out in this policy.

10 Breaches of the policy

Any breach of this policy may lead to disciplinary action being taken against the staff member involved in line with the United Learning Disciplinary Policy. A breach of this policy leading to breaches of confidentiality, defamation, or damage to the reputation of the School or United Learning or any illegal acts that render the School or United Learning liable to third parties will result in disciplinary action appropriate to the severity of the breach. Where necessary, this could result in escalation to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and ultimately the Police.

Contracted providers of services to the School/United Learning must inform the School/United Learning immediately of any breaches of this policy by their staff so that appropriate action can be taken to protect confidential information and limit the damage to the reputation of the School/United Learning. Any action against breaches should be according to contractors' internal disciplinary procedures.



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11 Document Information

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