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Dunottar School

# Social Media Policy

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# DUNOTTAR SCHOOL POLICY ON SOCIAL MEDIA

This policy should be read in conjunction with the [Dunottar IT Policies](#).

## Introduction

The internet provides a range of social media tools that allow users to interact with one another; for example, from rediscovering friends on social networking sites such as Facebook to keeping up with other people's lives on Twitter and maintaining pages on internet encyclopaedias such as Wikipedia.

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

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

This policy statement also aims to help staff use social media with minimal professional risk. Staff members must be conscious at all times of the need to keep their personal and professional lives separate.

## Key Personnel

Gina Wiles (Marketing Manager) and Katie Tomlinson (Social Media Officer) are responsible for creating and reviewing the policy.

## Scope

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

This policy applies to personal web presences such as social networking sites (for example Facebook) blogs and microblogs (such as Twitter), chatrooms, forums, podcasts, open access online encyclopaedias (such as Wikipedia), social bookmarking sites (such as Pinterest) and content sharing sites (such as Flickr and YouTube).

The internet is a fast-moving technology, and it is impossible to cover all circumstances or emerging media—the principles set out in this policy must be followed irrespective of the medium.

## Legal Framework

Dunottar School is committed to ensuring that all staff members provide confidential services that meet the highest standards. All individuals working on behalf of Dunottar School 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 a number of laws and professional codes of conduct, including:

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

Staff should also be aware of the guidance and sanctions contained within the Dunottar School Disciplinary Policy.

Confidential information includes, but is not limited to:

- Person-identifiable information, e.g. pupil and employee records protected by the Data Protection Act 1998 (see Data Protection Policy)
- 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, and
- 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:

- Libel Act 1843
- Defamation Acts 1952 and 1996
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994
- Malicious Communications Act 1998
- Communications Act 2003, and
- Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

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

## Professional Use of Social Media

Many schools maintain presences on various social media sites, as they provide very effective additional channels of communication with parents/ carers, pupils and the wider community.

For example, Twitter is used to collate and publicise a stream of positive messages about the multitude of activities that occur in departments and at Dunottar. 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.

This is not without risk, however, and staff members should be aware that:

- Services such as Twitter 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, who should not rely on being able to delete them
- Schools and United Learning may re-tweet the submissions of staff members to their wider following
- Pupils or parents may retweet comments and pictures which directly relate to them, their family or their friends.

The ability to post anonymous comments to social media platforms, such as Twitter, may result in offensive or upsetting comments being directed at schools or staff.

### Policy Statements

Staff members should maintain a professional persona through any use of social media for work purposes. Usernames should be formal (e.g. @MrSmithSchoolName) or anonymised (e.g. @DunottarEnglish, @DunottarMaths). The latter option also distances the user from their real-life identity and makes online bullying less likely. Staff members are encouraged to send all content for social media to the Social Media Officer for posting on Dunottar's main school channels.

All professional submissions to social media sites must show Dunottar School and/or United Learning in a positive light and should be written without ambiguity or any rhetorical device (such as sarcasm), which might be misinterpreted. It is surprisingly easy for even the gentlest of humour to be read differently than intended when parsed through abbreviated media such as Twitter. Remember that anything you post is representing the school. Therefore, think carefully about the content of your post and pay attention to spelling, grammar and punctuation.

Staff members must not enter into dialogue using social media such as Twitter, which schools and United Learning are using purely as a one-way channel for distributing news unless the dialogue is professional, to promote links with other schools (e.g. 'Thanks @CaterhamSport for hosting this afternoon's fixture') or individuals (e.g. 'Thanks @JohnSmith for visiting and delivering some exciting iPad training!'). Departmental accounts might also be used to share revision or study resources.

Pupils who follow department accounts are not followed back, nor are their feeds read. Any attempt by other users to interact with staff members via such services should be reported to the Deputy Head (Pastoral) for advice and resolution. The simplest option is usually to take such issues offline. Even the simple act of responding to a pupil's tweeted question confirms that the pupil attends the school. This links to their wider digital identity (such as photographs) and does so in a purposefully public forum.

If a pupil follows Dunottar or comments on a Dunottar Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Threads or TikTok post, their profile is immediately visible to the Social Media Officer. If the pupil's first name and surname are attached to an image on the child's account, Katie Tomlinson will alert John Weiner (Deputy Head) to follow up as a child protection issue.

Staff members should exercise professional judgement when using social media. If new to 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 will be taken should a member of staff make a submission which brings Dunottar School or United Learning into disrepute.

### **Names and Images**

Do not include the full names of any pupils who are featured in a photograph or disclose which form group they are in – first names are acceptable. Posts that do not include a photograph of pupils can include full names but please do not disclose form groups.

Any images posted on a social media site should be chosen carefully and should show the school positively. Images of pupils must only be uploaded with exceptional caution. Images which might reasonably be judged to cause embarrassment to the pupil should not be published. Where possible, try not to take photographs of individual pupils. Group shots are better for posting online and mean there is not a focus on one individual pupil.

### **Safeguarding when taking Photographs**

It is important to be vigilant when taking photographs of pupils to post on social media:

- Ensure pupils are appropriately dressed and that, if they are wearing uniform, it correctly follows the uniform guidelines.
- Photographs of pupils in their swimming costumes should not be used under any circumstances.
- Ensure any visible name badges are blurred.

Staff should protect themselves by using school equipment to take photographs or record images of pupils.

### **Parental Permission**

A number of parents have not provided permission for their children's images to be posted on social media platforms. All teachers need to be aware of who these children are so that they do not post images or inadvertently send images to be posted that could result in Dunottar School being subject to legal action. The "Students with Limited or No Photographic Permission!" document can be found on the SubjectShare in Marketing & Branding.

### **Images of Pupils from other Schools**

If Dunottar pupils are attending an event where pupils from other schools are present, staff must exercise caution when photographing those other pupils. At the majority of such events, it is not possible to be certain that permission to photograph those children has been granted. The permission given by parents is, in most instances, for the child's current school to take photographs for use by that school, not for any third party to take photographs of that child. With that in mind, it is not possible for a teacher to authorise an external party i.e. another school or an event organiser, to take, share or distribute images.

At a large public event where parents are also present, such as a sports match with spectators or a concert with an audience, group shots are acceptable (although it would still be preferable to try to

focus on Dunottar pupils where feasible). At non-public events where there are smaller numbers of pupils, do not take close-up photographs which clearly show the faces of pupils from other schools. In these instances, there will almost always still be a way of taking a photo to mark the occasion i.e. a picture across a whole room without close-ups of any pupils' faces or a photo of the Dunottar pupils arriving at the event etc.

### **Images of Staff**

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. Please also keep in mind that this courtesy should be extended to other adults both at school and at external events i.e. guest speakers/teachers from other schools/visiting experts/hosts at external events.

### **Passwords**

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 upper case and lower-case characters must be combined with numerals and symbols. The potential for hijacked accounts to bring Dunottar 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.

Devices used to post content to social media platforms must be password protected to prevent third parties from posting on your behalf.

Fraping (or Facebook raping) is where a third party changes a person's status or posts inappropriate content to a social media platform without their consent or knowledge. The consequences can be long term and damaging.

Passwords used for school social media accounts must be unique and not used anywhere else either personally or professionally.

### **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, 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 your consent.

It is therefore vital that the use of social media in staffs' lives 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.

### Policy Statements

With the exception of LinkedIn, staff members are advised not to identify themselves as employees of the school or 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 Dunottar School or United Learning and to safeguard the privacy of staff members, particularly those involved in providing sensitive frontline services. Do not name Dunottar School or United Learning in any biographical detail associated with personal accounts or use our logos or any other identifying information (such as location).

Staff members are advised not to have contact through any personal social medium with any pupils or member of a pupils' family, whether from Dunottar School or any other school, unless the pupil(s) involved 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.

Staff members should not put themselves in a position where extreme political, religious or philosophical 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 teachers who express such views have found their position at 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 teachers whose behaviour becomes known through social media have found their position at school to be compromised.

Staff members must decline 'friend requests' from pupils they receive to their personal social media accounts. Instead, 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 Facebook or Twitter accounts.

On leaving Dunottar School/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 Dunottar, 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.



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.

Employees should be aware that United Learning has a policy for raising concerns at work, and this should be followed should any concerns arise. Using a social networking site to raise any concerns at work will not be considered as appropriate.

## **Social Networking Standards**

Below sets out the standards expected of all United Learning employees when using social networking sites:

### **DO**

- Act responsibly at all times. Even if you do not identify your profession or place of work, please be aware that your conduct online could jeopardise any professional registration and/or your employment.
- Protect your own privacy. Think through what kind of information you want to share online and with whom you want to share this information. Adjust your privacy settings accordingly. Remember that the more personal information you share online, the more likely it is that something could have a negative impact on your employment.

- Think about managing your online friends by restricting what kind of information you give them access to.
- Remember everything is public. Even with the highest level of privacy settings, once something is online it can be copied and redistributed, and it is easy to lose control of the information. Work on the assumption that everything you post online will be permanent and will be shared with others.
- Take appropriate action if you are the target of abuse online. If you find yourself the target of bullying or abuse online, then you can take action in dealing with this, such as blocking individuals from interacting with you and using the sites' support mechanisms to report inappropriate activity. The Dunottar Safeguarding Policy also sets out support mechanisms to deal with cyberbullying issues.
- Be considerate to your colleagues. Pictures or information about colleagues should not be posted on social networking sites unless you have the agreement of the individual concerned. Always remove information about a colleague if they ask you to do so.
- Respect the privacy of others. If photographs are taken at a Dunottar event, then check whether those in attendance expect that any photos may appear on a public social networking site before posting. Remember it may not always be an appropriate way to share information whether work related or not.
- Update any online sources in a transparent manner. In the course of work, employees may find errors or out-of-date information displayed through online encyclopaedias. If updating this information, then you must be transparent about who you are and the capacity in which you are doing this. Employees should consult their line manager before updating or amending any information about Dunottar School from an online source.
- Remember the benefits. Used responsibly, social networking sites can be accessed to keep up-to-date with a number of professions and information. Many use Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn to update and communicate with members. Work blogs may also be useful for communication, networking and professional development purposes but must be discussed and agreed with your relevant Manager/Group Leader.

## DO NOT

- Share confidential information online. In line with the Data Protection Act 1998 employees should not share any child / young person / mother / father / carer identifiable information online or any personal information about colleagues. In addition to this, any confidential information about Dunottar School should not be revealed online.
- Build or pursue relationships with children, young people, mothers and fathers / carers. Even if the child / young person / mother / father / carer is no longer within your care, Dunottar School does not deem this as appropriate behaviour. If you receive a request from a child / young person / mother / father / carer / then many sites allow you to ignore this request without the individual being informed to avoid any offence. If you are concerned about this in any circumstance, please discuss with your line manager.

- Use social networking sites to inform professional practice. There are some circumstances / job roles where this may be appropriate; however, careful consideration and discussions with management should be applied in line with the information set out in this policy.
- Discuss work related issues online. This takes into account conversations about child / young person / mother / father / carer / colleagues or anything else which may identify Dunottar School online and bring it into potential disrepute. Even if you think these conversations have been anonymised, they are very likely to be deemed inappropriate.
- Post pictures of children / young people / their mothers / fathers / carers. Never post pictures online even if they have asked you to do this. Employees should never take pictures of a child / young person / mother / father / carer unless they are relevant. If your mobile phone has a camera, then this should not be used in the workplace. Please refer to the IT Policies.
- Raise concerns about your work. Social networking sites should never be used for raising or escalating concerns at work. If you have concerns, then these should be raised through discussions with your line manager or following the Dunottar School policy/procedure for raising concerns at work.
- Engage in activities online which may bring the organisation into disrepute. Think through what activities you take part in whilst online and what you do or say that may bring Dunottar School into disrepute. Any reports of this will be reviewed in line with their appropriateness.
- Be abusive to or bully other colleagues. Social networking sites should not be used as a forum for abusive behaviour towards colleagues. Cyberbullying and what it means is set out in the organisation's Bullying and Harassment policy and procedure.
- Post / "like" / endorse derogatory, defamatory or offensive comments about colleagues, the children / young person / mothers / fathers / carers, your work or Dunottar School. Everything posted on a social networking site should be deemed as open to the public and it is therefore unacceptable to use this as a forum for posting inappropriate comments.
- All of the above applies to both open and private sections of any social networking site with which employees identify themselves.

Name of Owner	John Weiner (owner from September 2023) M.Broughton	
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Policy updated	Oct 2022	K.Tomlinson
Policy updated	Oct 2023	K. Tomlinson
Governor responsible for Policy	Andy Porteous	