Lincolnshire
COUNTY COUNCIL ©

School's Employment Manual

Code of Conduct

This document applies to Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools and is advisory for Foundation and Voluntary Aided Schools

Code of Conduct
Contents Table

Introduction

This advice provides guidance to Head Teachers and, through them, to Governors, in **Community and Voluntary Controlled Primary, Secondary and Special Schools** with delegated budgets.

Employees in **Foundation and Voluntary Aided Schools** will be employed directly by the Governors of that school. This policy is available for these schools to adopt, but there is no requirement from the local authority for them to do so.

Schools should adapt and adopt these policies to reflect local requirements.

Where the policy indicates that permission, advice or notification should be sought from the Head Teacher, this will be the case for all staff, except for the Head Teacher who will seek this from the Chair of Governors.

Purpose

The purpose of the code is to supplement an employee's terms and conditions of employment and to support the School's values, standards and behaviours.

Links with Other Policies

The Code of Conduct draws together policies and requirements of the School and aims to assist you in performing your duties to the best of your ability.

You are required to familiarise yourself with the contents of the Code and the documents referred to therein. It cannot cover every eventuality and if you are in any doubt, or if you require any additional guidance you should consult your manager, Head Teacher or Human Resources contact.

The Code applies to all employees of the School. A breach of the Code may lead to disciplinary action under the School's Disciplinary Policy.

The policy encompasses both guidelines from the Teacher Standards; Lincolnshire County Council's own Code of Conduct and School policies. It is also based on the key principles of public life recommended by the Committee on Standards in Public Life (The Nolan Committee). These principles are:

1. Honesty, Integrity, Impartiality and Objectivity

An employee must perform their duties with honesty, integrity, impartiality and objectivity.
Employees serve the School as a whole and have individual responsibility as part of their job roles for implementing policy, delivery of services and operational management of the School.

Those employees, where it is part of their duties, who work at senior level with political sensitivity to advise and support Governors, will ensure that Governors have appropriate and timely information on key issues and decisions; and will give Governors independent and professional advice, not influenced by political views or preferences.

It is also vital that employees understand that it is not just about reality, it is also about perception. The public has a right to expect the highest levels of integrity and responsibility from all employees. This must be capable of demonstration and therefore actions, which lead to a loss of confidence through perceptions, are as critical as any others.

Political Neutrality
Employees serve the School as a whole. It follows that they must serve all Governors equally. Employees should not be involved in advising any political group, nor in attending any of their meetings, without the express consent of the Head Teacher and they must not compromise their political neutrality. As an employee of the School, employees are required to serve the School and cannot therefore, be accountable to individual political groups and must not allow their personal political opinions to interfere with their work.

All School employees are eligible to stand for office as a Member of Parliament or as a member of a County, District, Borough or Parish Council, provided any resultant conflict of interest is declared. The exception will be those staff employed in Community and Voluntary Controlled Primary, Secondary and Special Schools with delegated budgets, who are employees of the County Council and are therefore barred from standing as a County Councillor.

2. Accountability

An employee must be accountable to the School for their actions.

Compliance with legislation, Terms and Conditions of Service and other written guidelines
During the course of their work employees should at all times be aware of and comply with relevant legislation; for example the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, the Equality Act 2010, the Data Protection Act 1998, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Computer Misuse Act 1990 and legislation within the specific school area (this list is not exhaustive)

All School employees have a responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people.

Employees should also have read and understood the conditions of service under which they are employed, including all School adopted policies, which take into account all legislation and national schemes. These policies are contained within a School's Employment Manual held by the School. In particular employees should be aware of
- The Safeguarding Policies and Procedures

- The Grievance Procedures.
- The Disciplinary Policy, which also contains the disciplinary rules
- The Equality and Diversity Policy

All School employees must ensure that policies relating to equality issues are complied with in addition to the requirements of the law. All members of the School community and other employees have the right to be treated with fairness and equity regardless of gender, religion or belief, race, colour, nationality, ethnic background, age, disability or sexual orientation.

Employees should ensure that they are aware of and follow the advice and guidance about using "social media" as contained in the Social Media Policy attached to this Code. The term "social media" includes websites, online tools, blogs and other interactive communication technologies (ICT). The Social Media Policy applies to all employees engaged on School business and employees' personal use of social media where it could be deemed to have a negative impact on the School's reputation.

Employees should be suitably dressed for their duties and responsibilities, including the wearing of appropriate safety clothing and equipment, in accordance with all Health and Safety regulations.

In addition, all employees should be conscious of, and ensure that they are complying with, any specific guidelines issued by their School. If any employee is a member of a professional institute or association they are also obliged to comply with any professional code and/or standards of practice pertaining to that organisation, e.g. codes of conduct for registered Teachers, Guidance for Safer Working Practice for Adults who work with Children and Young People, accountancy professional bodies', social care.

3. Respect for Others

An employee must:
a) treat others with respect
b) not discriminate unlawfully against any person; and
c) treat Governors of the School professionally

Dignity at Work

Employees
The School wishes to create an environment where all its employees are treated with dignity and respect. There should be mutual respect between all employees. The School will have procedures in place to deal with harassment, discrimination, victimisation and bullying.

Governors
For some employees, their role is to give advice to governors and all are there to carry out the business of the School. Mutual respect between employees and Governors is essential to the efficient running of the School. Close personal familiarity between employees and individual Governors can

damage relationships and prove embarrassing to other employees and Governors and should therefore be avoided. Employees who have or enter into a personal relationship with a Governor should declare this to the Head Teacher.

The Local Community
As an employee of the School, employees are expected to give the highest possible standard of service to the public and, where it is part of their duties, to provide appropriate advice to Governors and fellow employees with impartiality. In carrying out duties and responsibilities, an employee's honesty and integrity must be beyond question. Employees must never use their authority or position for personal gain, or to enable colleagues or others to gain personally. An employee's own professional body may have its own care policy in addition to these guidelines.

Contractors
All relationships of a business or private nature with external contractors or potential contractors of the School should be made known to the Head Teacher. Orders and contracts must be awarded on merit in fair competition with other tenders and no part of the local community should be discriminated against or special favours shown.

Financial
If an employee discovers that a contract in which they have a financial or other interest has been, or could be, entered into, they must advise the Head Teacher

4. Stewardship

An employee must:
a) use any public funds entrusted to, or handled by themselves, in a responsible manner
b) not make personal use of property or facilities of the School unless properly authorised to do so

Copyright
All records, documents and other papers relating to the finance and administration of the School and which are compiled or acquired by an employee in the course of their employment, are and will remain the property of the School. In the case of academic work, such as projects undertaken as part of a course to further their professional career and including books, contributions to books, articles and conference papers, the copyright will belong to the employee.

Care and Use of School Resources
School resources, whether tangible assets such as materials, equipment and cash, or business information, may not be used other than for the proper advancement of the business of the School.

All equipment belonging to the School should be treated with due care and respect. Any employee wishing to use an item of equipment, for example a photocopier, word processer or printer, for business other than that of the School, must gain permission from their Head Teacher.

Security and use of Computer data/equipment
The information stored and processed on the information technology systems operated by the School are of paramount importance to its day to day activities. It is therefore essential that the data and systems are adequately secured against risks such as operator error, theft of equipment, unauthorised access to or copying of programmes, use of unauthorised software on School owned machines (which increases the risk of importing computer viruses) and natural hazards such as fire, flood and power failures.

In this regard, relevant legislation, in the form of the Data Protection Act 1998 (which requires all users of personal data to register with the Information Commissioners Office and comply with the eight Data Protection Principles), and the Computer Misuse Act 1990 (which seeks to secure computer material against access or modification), must be complied with. Copies of these Acts are available from the County Council's Legal Office. Advice is available from the County Council's Data Protection Officer.

Employees must endeavour to ensure that no unauthorised person gains access to equipment/data, which is within their responsibilities. No data should be released unless finally approved and that conforms with Data Protection legislation. User identifications and passwords must not be disclosed to anyone and passwords must be changed regularly to a previously unused password.

Misuse and time wasting of the e-mail system is unacceptable and personal messages should be kept to a minimum. E-mail must not be used to undertake personal business for monetary gain.

Under the law, if an e-mail message is sent during the course of an employee's employment which is defamatory, the employer is liable even if the message is sent between one employee and another. E-mails are not normally deleted from the system and are available for audit purposes. The tone and content of messages should be appropriate and consistent with any other form of School communication.

Personal use of the internet, including Social Media is permitted by employees provided that the Social Media Policy is adhered to and it does not impact on their job or interfere with the performance of other staff doing their job. There should be no access to sites which have a terrorist, offensive, sexual or game playing/gambling content. Employees should be aware that access to the internet will be monitored on a regular basis.

5. Personal Interests

An employee must not in their official or personal capacity;

a) **Allow their personal interests to conflict with the School's requirements or;**

b) **Use their position improperly to confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person.**

Alcohol/Drugs

The School may have adopted a policy on the Prevention of Alcohol and Drug misuse, which is aimed at ensuring that employees report fit for work and remain fit to perform their duties. The consumption of alcohol is not permitted on School premises unless specifically approved by the Head Teacher. The School prohibits the use, possession, distribution or sale of drugs at the workplace or when conducting School business.

Where it is established that there is an alcohol or drug dependency problem, this will be considered as a treatable illness and Head Teachers will provide assistance wherever possible. The County Council's Employee Support and Counselling Service is also available to provide counselling and advice. Where an employee refuses help or drops out of a treatment programme this will not be automatic grounds for dismissal; however any unacceptable level of behaviour or level of performance thereafter will be subject to appropriate action.

Other Personal Interests

Employees are also required to declare an interest if it comes to their attention that they have a connection or potential connection with any business or organisation (including voluntary bodies) which deals with the School, for example, if a relative is a supplier.

An employee's life away from work is their personal concern. An employee should not however, subordinate their work to their private interests or put themselves in a position where their job or the School's interests and their own interests conflict. This includes behaviour which, because of the nature of the employment, would undermine the School's confidence or trust in the employee.

An example of such behaviour relates to School employees facing criminal charges. The School requires all employees to notify their Head Teacher without delay of any criminal investigation, charge or caution imposed upon them with the exception of minor driving offences. These rules apply for charges incurred on or off duty.

Additional Employment

The School will not prevent an employee from undertaking additional employment provided it does not conflict with the interests of, or in any way weaken public confidence in the School and does not in any way affect performance of their duties and responsibilities whilst they are at work, or where their current position could confer advantage to their private interest/personal gain. If there is a conflict the Head Teacher can ask for an employee to discontinue with the conflicting private business interests.

Employees have a duty to take reasonable care of their own health and safety. Employees must inform their Head Teacher if they have or take up additional employment, particularly where this means that their total number of hours worked exceed an average of 48 hours per week or which could have a detrimental effect on their health and safety.

A related issue concerns payment received by employees for work which arises principally as a result of work related skills and is carried out for private purposes during working hours (by prior agreement) or on special leave from the School, or when using School information, equipment or facilities. Examples might be when an employee writes a book using School owned information and equipment, an employee who marks examination papers during School holidays or an employee who produces computer software which is capable of being marketed outside the School for profit. Should an instance of this nature arise, Head Teachers should consult their Human Resources provider concerning the acceptability of the project and, if applicable, how resulting payments will be handled, prior to commencement of any such work.

6. Registration of Interests

An employee must comply with any requirements of the School;
   a) to register or declare interests and;
   b) to declare hospitality, benefits or gifts received as a consequence of their employment

Payments and Gifts
An employee should not receive any reward or fee other than their proper remuneration. As a general rule employees should tactfully refuse offers of gifts or services from organisations or persons who do, or might provide work, goods or services to the School or who require a decision from the School (for example regarding a school placement).

However, where it is felt that refusal of a small gift or token of appreciation (for example a small box of chocolates) would cause offence or would upset a relationship, the gift may be retained provided it is recorded in a register provided for that purpose within the School. Similarly, advertising material (for example calendars, diaries and pens) given to employees may be kept provided that they are deemed to have been given to the employee as distinct from a personal gift and provided that the Head Teacher is fully aware of the circumstances.

In the case of an employee becoming the beneficiary of a will from a member of the School community, employees must refuse to accept any legacy/bequest regardless of its size or value if it is as a consequence of their employment. Employees must also report the legacy/bequest to their Head Teacher. Acceptance of such legacies/bequests will result in disciplinary action.

The overriding requirement is that the School must be able to demonstrate that its employees have not been influenced by improper motives.

Hospitality
It is acknowledged that, on occasions, the business of the School can be progressed through, for example, working lunches or dinners. As a general rule, employees should only accept offers of hospitality if there is a genuine need to impart information or represent the School in the community. If on the other hand the hospitality offered is primarily a social function, at which business matters are of a secondary concern (for example test matches, rugby internationals or concert performance) then it is unacceptable, and such invitations should normally be refused. When hospitality is declined, those making the offer should be informed of the procedures and standards operating within the School.

It is of vital importance that the possibility of an employee being deemed by others to have been influenced in making a decision as a result of accepting such hospitality should be avoided at all costs, for their own protection.

In taking this advice, employees should err on the side of caution and, if in any doubt, consult their Head Teacher. Each gift, act of hospitality or offer thereof, must be recorded in a register provided in the School for that purpose.

Promotional Sales/Benefits
Offers from companies of promotional sales should be declined. Employees should bring such matters to the attention of their Head Teacher in order that a decision can be made whether it would be appropriate to write to the company concerned to inform them that improved discounts are the only form of promotion acceptable to the School.

The use of personal loyalty cards whilst making purchases on behalf of the School is also unacceptable. It may bring into question the impartiality of the use of that supplier.

Any prizes won whilst on School business or whilst using School funds should be reported immediately to the Head Teacher who will make a decision as to the acceptability of such a prize.

Sponsorship
Where an external organisation wishes to sponsor or is seeking to sponsor a School activity, whether by invitation, tender negotiation or voluntarily, the conventions concerning acceptance of gifts or hospitality apply. Particular care must be taken when dealing with contractors or potential contractors.

7. Reporting Procedures

An employee must not treat another employee of the School less favourably than other employees by reason that the other employee has done, intends to do, or is suspected of doing, anything under or by

reference to, any procedure the School has for reporting misconduct (i.e. employees should not victimise another employee who has used the School's reporting procedures to report on the misconduct of others)

Employees are expected to report the non-compliance of other employees to the Head Teacher. Under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, employees are legislatively protected in the event that they raise any concerns.

Employees will be expected, through agreed procedures, to report any deficiency in the provision of service. Employees must report to the Head Teacher any impropriety or breach of procedure.

Anti Fraud and Anti Corruption
The School is committed to ensuring the maintenance of high standards in every aspect of its activities. As part of this commitment the School will ensure that opportunities for fraud and corruption are identified and actively managed to reduce possible risks. Where there is suspicion of fraud or corruption the School will deal with it in a firm and controlled manner.

8. Openness

An employee must:
   a) **not disclose information given to them in confidence by anyone, or information acquired which they believe is of a confidential nature, without the consent of a person authorised to give it, or unless they are required by law to do so; and**
   b) **not prevent another person from gaining access to information to which that person is entitled by law.**

Openness and Use of Information
During the course of their employment employees will come across confidential information. All employees must understand and comply with Information Governance requirements. This refers to the correct handling and management of information to comply with relevant legislation, confidentiality and security standards.

The duty of confidentiality is imposed on all staff no matter what their function or capacity within the School. A breach of confidentiality may be considered as a disciplinary matter.

Information Governance is the framework of law and best practice that regulates the manner in which information, (including information relating to and identifying individuals) is managed, i.e. obtained, handled, used and disclosed. It is a complex and rapidly developing area and one of the upmost importance since information is central to any organisation and underpins everything we do.

Information concerning an employee's private affairs must not under any circumstances be supplied to any person outside the School without the

consent of the employee, nor to anyone within the School unless that person has authority or responsibility for such information.

Employees must never use their authority or position for personal gain, or to enable colleagues or others to gain personally. Any particular information received by an employee from a Governor which, is personal to the Governor and does not belong to the School, must not be divulged by the employee without prior consent of that Governor, except where disclosure is required or sanctioned by law.

If an employee has any reservations about any request to supply information they should immediately refer the matter to the Head Teacher.

Media Contacts
Employees must not make statements to the media, or any other public statement which concerns the business of the School unless they have been authorised by their Head Teacher to act generally as a spokesperson or have been expressly authorised to act as a spokesperson in relation to a particular situation, or are acting as an authorised Trade Union spokesperson.

9. Appointment of Staff

a) An employee must not be involved in the appointment or any other decision relating to the discipline, promotion, pay or conditions of another employee, or prospective employee, who is a relative or friend.
b) In this paragraph
     1) "relative" means spouse, civil partner, partner, parent, parent-in-law, son, daughter, step-son, step-daughter, child of partner, brother, sister, grandparent, grandchild, uncle, aunt, nephew, niece, or the spouse or partner of any of the preceding persons; and
     2) "partner" in paragraph (1) above means a member of a couple who live together.

Appointment of Staff and other Employment Matters
Employees involved in appointments should ensure that those appointments are made only on the basis of merit. In order to avoid any possible accusations of bias, employees should not be involved in an appointment where they are related to an applicant, or have a personal relationship with them outside work.

Similarly, employees should not be involved in decisions relating to discipline, promotion, recruitment or pay and conditions for any other employee who is a relative, partner, etc.

10. Duty of Trust

An employee must at all times act in accordance with the trust that the public is entitled to place in them.

Employees are expected within reason, to be ready and able at the agreed times to carry out their job. Politeness and courtesy should be expressed to the public and to all members of the school community at all times. Customer care and courtesy must be maintained with appropriate professional boundaries and particular attention should be paid when in contact with children. In carrying out their duties and responsibilities their honesty and integrity should be beyond question.

Personal Relationships at Work Policy

Definition

Definition of close personal relationship:
- Employees or applicants who are married, dating, in a civil partnership or co-habiting arrangement;
- Immediate family members of the applicant or employee e.g. parents and step-parents, son and daughter, brother and sister, grandparent and grandchild;
- Other relations of the applicant or employee e.g. extended family such as aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces, nephews and any other individuals with whom there is a close personal relationship;

The School recognises that relationships as defined above may exist or develop within the organisation. Whilst not all such situations raise any issues there may be occasions where a perceived or actual conflict of interest exists between an employee's job or the County Council and public's interests and the employee's personal interests.

Objectives

The policy aims to assist Head Teachers and employees in dealing sensitively, but effectively, with situations where employees have, or form, a relationship as defined, with a work colleague.

Minimum Standards

The provisions of this policy are intended to avoid any possible conflict of interest, perception or accusation of bias, favouritism or prejudice. They are also intended to ensure that all employees feel confident of fair treatment without the fear that a close personal relationship will influence their or other employees' treatment or broader working relationships.

The Procedure

Participation in recruitment, promotions, grievance and discipline

All applicants are required to disclose on the application form if they are related to any County Councillors (and Governors of the School) or Senior Officers. Applicants are asked to state the name of the person and the relationship. Failure to disclose such a relationship may disqualify the applicant or may result in action being taken in accordance with the Disciplinary Procedure.

To avoid any accusation of bias an employee must not be involved in any appointment process where they are related, or have a close personal relationship outside of work with the individual being considered for appointment. Employees involved in appointments should ensure that those appointments are made only based on merit.

Employees must not be involved in any decisions relating to discipline, grievance, promotion or pay adjustments for any employee where there is a close personal relationship as defined within this policy.

Where there is a relationship between an applicant and a manager

Where new appointments are being considered, and there is a personal relationship between an applicant and an existing employee, where one of them would be the immediate line manager or senior reporting manager of that team, the implications of this should be considered and discussed as part of the selection process. This is to ensure that, assuming they are otherwise the most suitable candidate for the job, the appointment would also be appropriate taking into account operational issues and standards.

The type of issues that should be explored include:
- potential conflict of interest and confidentiality issues, including the impact on the perceptions and employee relations within the team;
- considering making alternative supervision/line management arrangements for the applicant where there are potential conflicts of interest;
- If the work of the post involves financial transactions there should be an appropriate separation of duties and probity and other financial safeguards are followed;
- impact on the School Community or the public, including issues relating to trust and confidence and the public image of the School.

It is important, however, to ensure that any approach or actions are not unfair or discriminatory, i.e. avoid any assumption at the outset that the working arrangement will be unsatisfactory without exploring the issues. Nevertheless, it is important to explore the issues that may arise to ensure these can be managed effectively.

Where there is a relationship between an applicant and team colleagues

Where an individual is appointed, transferred or promoted and will work in the same team or establishment with an employee with whom they have a relationship as defined in this document, but not in a line management relationship, the implications of this should be considered and discussed as part of the selection process.

Authority to appoint

Where, following consideration of all the factors, the employee responsible for the appointment considers that a candidate could be appointed, despite a declared relevant relationship as defined, they must clear the appointment with their Head Teacher.

Where one party to the relationship is the Head Teacher, the necessary authority for appointment should be authorised by the Chair of Governors who may seek advice from the relevant Human Resource provider.

Where the relationship in question concerns the Chair of Governors, the appointment should be cleared by the Governors Personnel Committee who may seek advice from the relevant Human Resource provider.

To avoid questions arising later, the appointing employee is required to make a written record of the fact that the decision to appoint, despite a declared relationship, was made with appropriate authority. This record should be kept with the candidate's original application form on his/her personal file; the candidate should be made aware of this and they should be advised of why it is necessary.

Relationships formed whilst in post

Relationships as defined may form between colleagues in the same team or School during the course of their employment. Such situations should be managed with care and sensitivity in the interests of all concerned. It is important, however to ensure that any approach or actions are not unfair or discriminatory.

Requirement to disclose a close personal relationship

Where a relationship as defined, is formed between members of the same team whilst in post, this should be disclosed, in confidence, to the Head Teacher where appropriate, by the employees concerned. This disclosure should be recorded on the employee's personal file.

It is acknowledged that work related friendships are quite naturally formed in the School. Any employee is therefore expected to exercise judgement as to whether or not the relationship has developed to such an extent that it can be described as a close personal relationship, which could potentially raise the issue that this policy seeks to address. Failure to disclose a personal relationship could leave an employee open to allegations of misconduct should subsequent issues arise.

Where a relationship develops between a member of the Senior Management Team and a team member

Where a close personal relationship involves the Head Teacher, Deputy Head Teacher or senior reporting manager and an employee, the appropriate senior manager within the team, in consultation with a Human Resources provider, should, in discussion with both employees:
- make alternative supervision/line management arrangements of the team member for issues involving a potential conflict of interest. These include matters related to pay, promotion, job opportunity, discipline and grievance issues;
- consider if it is appropriate to communicate any agreed adjustments etc to other colleagues in the team/School to manage any concerns;

- more specific operational issues e.g. in relation to finance and procurement roles and responsibilities which are governed by Financial Regulations, Procedures, or Procurement Rules;
- assess any impact on the School community, including issues relating to trust and confidence and the public image of the School.

Expectations should be clearly defined and managed as appropriate.

Relationships between team members

Where a relationship as defined, is between two team members (with no line management or supervisory relationship) the member of the Senior Management Team should explore the relevant issues with the individuals concerned, including:
- any general operational issues such as working patterns and arrangements;
- more specific operational issues including finance and procurement roles and responsibilities which are governed by Financial Regulations, Procedures, or Procurement Rules;
- any potential conflict of interest and confidentiality issues;
- any impact on the School community, including issues relating to trust and confidence and the public image of the School;
- consider if it is appropriate to communicate such agreed adjustments etc to other colleagues in the team/School to manage any concerns.

Expectations should be clearly defined and managed as appropriate.

Inter team relationships

Where a relationship as defined, is between two team members from separate teams whose functions are interdependent, for example an administrative team that supports teachers, a member of the Senior Management Team should explore the relevant issues with the individuals concerned, including:
- any general operational issues such as working patterns or arrangements;
- more specific operational issues including finance and procurement roles and responsibilities which are governed by Financial Regulations, Procedures, or Procurement Rules;
- any potential conflict of interest and confidentiality issues;
- any impact on the School community, including issues relating to trust and confidence and the public image of the School;
- consider if it is appropriate to communicate such agreed adjustments etc to other colleagues in the team/School to manage any concerns.

Expectations should be clearly defined and managed as appropriate.

When issues cannot be managed effectively

Where any issues identified cannot be managed effectively or the individuals within the relationship feel uncomfortable remaining within the same team or School, there will be the need to explore, in discussion with both employees,

whether a move to another team or School might be the most appropriate way forward.

When discussing such an issue there should be no assumptions made, on gender, status/grade etc. as to who might be the most appropriate employee to move. Care should be taken to avoid discrimination and ensure that the views of the individuals involved are taken into account, balancing this with the needs of the service and the issues that present themselves.

A Human Resources provider can assist with this process where required and reference should be made to the Redeployment Scheme for School Based Staff.

When relationships break down

There may be occasions when a relationship as defined, breaks down and the individuals concerned remain in the same team or School with a potential impact on relationships and service delivery. In such cases, use of the Council's Employee Support and Counselling Service may be useful to the individuals concerned as an initial approach. If it is envisaged that the breakdown of the relationship is or will cause ongoing workplace issues, these should be addressed sensitively in discussion with the employees with a view to the issues being resolved, where possible.

The Schools Human Resources provider can assist with this process where required and reference should be made to the Redeployment Scheme for School Based Staff. This may, ultimately, in some cases need to involve exploring with the parties the scope for transfer of one or both of them.

Use of confidential and private information

Employees may acquire information that has not been made public and is still confidential. It is a betrayal of trust to breach such confidences. Employees should never use or disclose such confidential information to anyone that they are in a personal relationship with for personal gain. The information should also not be to the disadvantage or the discredit of the School or anyone else. Equally, employees should always observe the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998.

Conduct or performance issues

As with any employee, significant conduct or performance issues may need to be dealt with, where appropriate, under the School's Disciplinary or Capability procedures. Much would depend on the nature and degree of the issue concerned or whether alternative approaches as outlined in this policy would be more appropriate or effective.

Transfer of employees

Should it be necessary, in the interests of the service, to consider the transfer of an employee every effort should be made to ensure that they are moved to comparable alternative employment in line with the Redeployment Scheme for School Based Staff.

Other colleagues affected by a close personal relationship

Employees who feel they are affected by a close personal relationship at work involving other colleagues, should at all times feel that they can approach without prejudice, their Head Teacher and/or Chair of Governors to explain their concerns.

Provision of references

When providing references, the individual providing the reference should make clear if it is provided as a personal or colleague reference or provided formally as a reference on behalf of the School. If a reference is not being provided by a member of the Senior Management Team of the School i.e. formally on behalf of the School, then the reference should not be produced on School headed stationery.

Relationships with contractors or potential contractors

No special favour should be shown in the tendering process to businesses run by, for example, friends, partners or relatives. Employees who engage or supervise contractors or have any other work relationship with contractors and have previously had, or currently have a close personal relationship with someone who works for contractors, must declare the relationship to their Head Teacher.

Further Information

For further information and guidance, managers should contact their Human Resources provider.

Social Media Policy

Introduction

The use of social media presents new and interesting opportunities for the School to reach out to members of the School community and the general public. Social media enables anyone with a computer and internet connection the quick and easy ability to publish opinion and information, and listen to and engage with those who read it.

This presents exciting opportunities for organisations to have conversations with the wider community in order to share news, information on services, and seek opinions from those with whom they work and serve.

Alongside these opportunities it must be recognised that there are risks attached to the use of social media. Distribution of material cannot be controlled. Once posted to an initial target audience, material can be posted anywhere through the networks of each individual in that audience and beyond. It is therefore important that users of social media understand the pitfalls as well as the benefits of the technology.

This policy is designed to ensure that there is appropriate, legal and effective use of social media as a communication channel for the School.

The Policy

'Social media' is the term commonly given to websites, online tools and other Information Communication Technologies (ICT) which allow users to interact with each other in some way – by sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interests. As the name implies, social media involves the building of communities or networks, encouraging participation and engagement. This policy will also apply to any new or emerging technologies or systems which may develop in the future.

Blogs (online diaries) are perhaps the most well known example of social media, but the term encompasses other platforms. Examples include, podcasts, message boards, social networking, such as Facebook, Twitter, bebo and MySpace, and content sharing websites such as Flickr and YouTube.

The increasing use of social media exposes organisations to greater reputational risk, either through ignorance or malicious intent, owing to the longevity of material once posted, and the ability of the Web to send information to worldwide audiences within seconds. Whether through print, broadcast or social media, reputation forms a single continuum. This policy contains some highlights of legal issues, such as defamation (libel and slander), around the use of social media.

There are specific safeguarding issues that employees who work closely with children or vulnerable adults need to be aware of. It is recommended that any employee with concerns regarding these service users should seek further

advice from their Head Teacher, both for the protection of the School community and themselves.

The objective of this policy is to protect the reputation of the School by providing a framework for the effective and safe use of social media to promote and develop the School's vision, services and achievements.

The aims of this policy are:
- To ensure that social media used to communicate with the School community and the general public by all School staff in the performance of their duties, is aligned to a communications strategy.
- To ensure that the School's social media sites are easily identifiable as originating from the School and correctly apply the School's logo and brand guidelines.
- To protect the reputation of the School while embracing the possibilities of this channel.
- To ensure that any School communication through social media meets legal requirements and is consistent with other communication activities.
- To prevent the unauthorised use of the School's branding on employees' personal social media sites.

Applying this policy
- School staff considering the use of, or wishing to use, social media as a channel for a project or campaign must first discuss and agree this with their Head Teacher.
- Social media channels already featuring the School's logo or branding must comply with brand guidelines.
- The unauthorised use of the School logo or branding on social media channels may result in action under the disciplinary procedure.
- Individual employees must not post any items on sites unless this has been reviewed by another person before publication to avoid unintentional errors being posted.

Applying this policy: personal use of social media channels
If you already make reference to your employment in the School on a personal internet site as defined above, or you intend to create such a site, you should inform the Head Teacher who will advise you of the appropriateness of doing this in line with the advicee below:
- Do not engage in activities on the internet that might bring the School into disrepute.
- Do not use the School logo on personal web pages.
- Do not reveal information which is confidential to the School - consult your Head Teacher if you are unsure.
- Do not include contact details or photographs of the School community or staff without their permission.
- Where possible do not accept pupils or ex-pupils as 'friends' on your site.
- Under no circumstance should offensive comments be made about the School, Governors, or colleagues on the Internet. This may amount to

cyber-bullying or defamation and ccould be deemed as a disciplinary offence.

Social media campaigns

- Colleagues who are considering social media campaigns should firstly consult the Head Teacher for guidance.
- You will need to ensure that the project has a clear purpose, fits into the existing communications plan, is suitable for the target audience you wish to reach and that you understand what the policy is regarding branding and transparency.
- Social media campaigns should be available in alternative formats to ensure that they are accessible to all (i.e. large fonts, different languages etc).
- At this stage, maintenance and moderation of the channels should be discussed and that the responsibility for the channel's upkeep is with the School employee who created it.
- Failure to maintain high standards must result in the channel being disestablished.

Legal Issues

There are circumstances under which employers can be held legally responsible for online content published by their employees. This may include action taken as part of their role for the organisation and material published on official organisation channels or somewhere that has been previously sanctioned by the School. It is therefore important to make all employees aware of the potential legal issues as well as any specific policy on engaging with social media.

Giving employees clear guidelines on what is and isn't considered acceptable helps both parties to understand the parameters when dealing with social media from an employment perspective. If using an organisational blog, we should bear in mind that posting the opinions of others can mean assuming a certain amount of legal responsibility for the content. We should therefore include a policy on any School blogs that outline how comments will be treated (for example, comments may be reviewed or moderated before publication).

It is important that employees are aware that posting information about the School cannot be isolated from their working life. Any information published online can be accessed around the world within seconds and will be publicly available for all to see.

Employees should take the following into consideration when using social media:
- Be aware of the School policy and guidelines for using social media, whether this is for personal use or as a part of their working role.
- Be familiar with the legal areas outlined below before writing about colleagues or sharing information about the School.

- Ensure that posted material does not disclose privileged or confidential information.

Examples of social media activities outlawed under the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations:
- Creating fake blogs ('ghosting').
- Falsely representing oneself as a customer.
- Falsely advertising on social media sites.

Libel and defamation

Defamation is the act of making a statement about a person or company (or School) that is considered to harm reputation, for example, by lowering others' estimation of the person or company (or School), or by causing them to lose their rank or professional standing. If the defamatory statement is written down (in print or online) it is known as libel. If it is spoken, it is known as slander. There are exceptions to this - posting a defamatory statement online or recording it on a podcast would both be examples of libel.

Other points to note

An organisation may be held responsible for something an employee has written or said if it is on behalf of the company (or School) or on a company-sanctioned space. Action can also be taken against anyone repeating libellous information from another source, so careful checks are needed before quoting statements from other blogs or websites. This can also apply to linking to defamatory information.

You should consider whether a statement can be proved before writing or using it – in law, the onus is on the person making the statement to establish its truth.

An organisation that provides a forum for blogging can be liable for defamatory statements they host.

Tips and Advice

Social Media or Social Networking is both a broadcast medium and a receiving medium. And it's both business and private.

From the business point of view:

- It can be used as a receiving medium to gather opinions about the School which have appeared on the social media networks. As such it is an invaluable tool to add to our understanding of what people think about us. As such this is a benign and useful tool.
- It is possible to broadcast using the same social media networks to engage with and talk to those who are interested enough to have a view. As such it is a useful and powerful tool. Again, this is a positive and welcome use of the media.

From a personal point of view:

- Individuals employed by the School are entitled to use whatever system they like outside of their working time and working persona, to engage in the social aspects of the media – both broadcasting and receiving.

  However great care should be taken to ensure the private/work line is not crossed.

- It is good practice to follow the stricture of never mentioning work, your opinions of your colleagues or processes and projects on your own private Social Media Networks.

Appendix – What is a Social Networking Site?

"'A social network service focuses on building online communities of people who share interests and/or activities, or who are interested in exploring the interests and activities of others. Most social network services are web-based and provide a variety of ways for users to interact, such as e-mail and instant messaging services.

Social networking has encouraged new ways to communicate and share information. Social networking websites are being used regularly by millions of people.' (Source: Wikipedia).

Any site that allows the interaction between people and/or organisations can be considered social networking, though most people think of Facebook and similar sites as typical examples of social networking.

What does a social networking site do?

These sites provide a platform – typically outside of an organisation's network – typically based on the World Wide Web where anybody can gain access and interact in some way with others. That interaction can be mainly written, as in Facebook and Twitter, it can be video as in YouTube or it can be multimedia, as in MSN. The main reason is often to keep in touch with larger groups of people already known to you, such as school or university friends.

Internal Social Media systems exist; the difference being 'Internal' means the content is not available to the outside world. It is a locked system.

What is a blog?

A blog is a form of diary or mini web site – usually web hosted and available to the world, although corporate and closed systems using blogs also exist. Open blogs are universally available and searchable and are mainly constructed by individuals to talk about issues which interest them.

Many blogs are semi-professional: during the last American election the parties treated bloggers with almost as much importance as they did traditional journalists employed by radio, TV and newspapers - such is the impact of the blogosphere on the way news is accessed by the public. Blogs

cover the whole spectrum of human activity and are the ultimate niche communication/marketing tool. Anybody can set one up using the likes of blogger.com or Wordpress.com. It takes just a few seconds.

Who are the major players?

Facebook: http://www.facebook.com
Facebook has millions of people online, each of whom has added a personal profile completed to some degree. These profiles often contain personal information and care is needed when setting them up and allowing access to them. Many School employees have private Facebook accounts.

The concept of Facebook is one where you can tell the world what you are doing at any given moment. Groups or communities are easily started up to exchange information and have 'conversations' over a period of time. Since these groups can be set up by anyone and are largely unmediated, anybody can say almost anything about whatever they wish to discuss, and derogatory or inaccurate comment is impossible to remove.

Twitter: http://www.twitter.com
This is a form of micro blogging *(see 'What is a blog'* above). It started out as a tool used by the employees of a company to keep each other informed of what they were doing, seeing or thinking about, moment by moment. The activity grew such that there are now millions of people 'tweeting' and following the 'tweets' of celebrities and organisations from actor Stephen Fry, who has half a million followers, to 10 Downing Street, which has slightly more at 700,000.

The big difference between Twitter and blogs is that you can only use 140 characters for each tweet. You tweet about anything, at any time. Any fellow twitterer can decide to read your tweets and become a follower, which means that your Tweets automatically appear on their Twitter page or mobile phone. They can also reply to you directly if they choose to.

Local authorities across the UK are using this to push out news updates and information. You can see these on www.twitter.com/uklocalcouncils

Yammer: www.yammer.com
Is a similar product which is designed entirely for use by organisations setting up closed groups.

YouTube: http://www.youtube.com
Is an internet accessible platform where videos can be posted so that anyone can see them? Links to video stories can be posted from anywhere within your web site making this a particularly powerful tool.

BEBO: http://www.bebo.com
BEBO, derived from Blog Early Blog Often, is a world-wide social networking site with a demographic of under 25 year-olds. Like Twitter, it can interface with mobile phones and, as such, is a powerful form of communication not only between the members of the community but with the community itself.

Again, in common with other social networking sites, there is the possibility of restricting access to people and profiles.

"Bebo offers three privacy levels: public, private and fully private. Public profiles can be seen by any user, except that profiles of users younger than 16 years are seen only by logged in users. Private profiles are seen only by their friends and members of any school or college they have joined. Fully private profiles are ones that have not joined any school and so only their direct friends can view their profile. If a user chooses the 'public' option, they can also set age restrictions on who can contact them. Age restrictions do not apply to direct friends. Bebo also allows a user to set their photos to private, so only friends can see them and can stop others from copying them too." *(Source: Wikipedia).*

A number of children-focused organisations have Bebo pages. Foremost of which is Childline. You can see it here http://www.bebo.com/childline.

Childline is using Bebo to talk to their target audience in a manner which suits the audience.

FLICKR: http://www.flickr.com/
Flickr is an internet available web site which can make pictures available to anyone, anywhere, anytime. Members upload photos and choose privacy levels to restrict access. So while this is a public site, not all the pictures need be. You can choose who can see your images and invite people to look at them. The user has the ability to control access to pictures at will. The service is largely free for the average user.

MSN: http://www.msn.com
MSN or Microsoft Network is a peer to peer communications tool. It provides the ability to chat in real time by typing or talking, if you have a microphone and speakers, or by video link if you have a camera. The connection is free and connections can be made point to point anywhere in the world – providing of course both ends are using MSN. This is similar to making a phone call.

These well-known players are not the only companies who perform this type of activity. There are many others available, but this gives a flavour of the current popularity and use of the medium.

This list is not exhaustive. It is produced simply to give an indication of the variety of Social media (networking) functionality. Also such is the nature of this media any figures are out of date as soon as they are written.