Merriott and Haselbury Plucknett Federation

	Name of Policy	Social Media Policy	
	Approved Date	September 2017	
	Next Review Date	September 2020	

School Ethos

Recognising the historic foundation of both schools, the federated board will ensure that the schools aim to serve their communities by providing an education of the highest possible quality.

The federated board recognises the community distinctiveness of Merriott First School and the importance of working in close partnership with parents and the community to ensure that its pupils grow into confident and responsible citizens in their own communities and the wider world.

The federated board will preserve and develop the religious character of Haselbury Plucknett Church of England First School in accordance with the principles of the Church of England and in partnership with the Church at parish and diocese level. It encourages an understanding of the meaning and significance of faith, and promotes Christian values through the experience it offers to all of its pupils.

Rationale

The widespread availability and use of social media applications bring opportunities to understand, engage, and communicate in new and exciting ways. It is important that we are able to use these technologies and services effectively and flexibly. However, it is also important to ensure that we balance this with our duties to our school, the community, our legal responsibilities and our reputation.

For example, our use of social networking applications has implications for our duty to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults.

The policy requirements in this document aim to provide this balance to support innovation whilst providing a framework of good practice. They apply to all members of staff at the school.

The purpose of the policy is to:
- Protect the school from legal risks
- Ensure that the reputation of the school, its staff and governors is protected
- Safeguard all children

Definitions and Scope

Social networking applications include, but are not limited to: Blogs, Online discussion forums, Collaborative spaces, Media sharing services, 'Microblogging' applications, and online gaming environments. Examples include Twitter, Facebook, Windows Live Messenger, YouTube, Flickr, Xbox Live, Blogger, Tumblr, Last.fm, and comment streams on public websites such as newspaper site.

All members of staff should bear in mind that information they share through social networking applications, even if they are on private spaces, are still subject to copyright, data protection and Freedom of Information legislation, the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 and other legislation. They must also operate in line with the school's Equalities, Child Protection, Code of Conduct and ICT Acceptable Use Policies.
Within this policy there is a distinction between use of school-sanctioned social media for professional educational purposes, and personal use of social media.

Use of Social Media in practice

1. Personal use of social media
- School staff will not invite, accept or engage in communications with children from the school community in any personal social media whilst in employment at schools within the Federation of Merriott First School and Haselbury Plucknett First School.

- Communications with parents who are friends on social media need to be conducted appropriately with no involvement of school information or issues.

- Any communication received from children on any personal social media sites must be reported to the designated person for Child Protection.

- If any member of staff is aware of any inappropriate communications involving any child in any social media, these must immediately be reported as above.

- All email communication between staff and members of the school community on school business must be made from an official school email account.

- Staff should not use personal email accounts or mobile phones to make contact with members of the school community on school business.

- Staff are advised to avoid messaging, posts or comments that refer to specific, individual matters related to the school and members of its community on any social media accounts as these may be in breach of the confidentiality policy and lead to disciplinary action.

- Staff are advised to think carefully about 'liking' any post if this breaches school policy e.g. photographs published without permission.

- Staff are also advised to consider the reputation of the school in any posts or comments related to the school on any social media accounts.

- Staff should not accept any current pupil of any age or any ex-pupil of the school under the age of 18 as a friend, follower, subscriber or similar on any personal social media account.

2. School-sanctioned use of social media

There are many legitimate uses of social media within the curriculum and to support student learning. For example: Some classes have used blogs for communication.

There are also possibilities for using social media to enhance and develop students' learning. When using social media for educational purposes, the following practices must be observed:

- Staff should set up a distinct and dedicated social media site or e-mail account for educational purposes. This should be entirely separate from any personal accounts held by members of staff, and ideally should be linked to an official school email account.

- The content of any school-sanctioned social media site should be solely professional and should reflect well on the school.

- Staff must not publish photographs of children without the written consent of parents /carers, identify by name any children featured in photographs, or allow personally identifying information to be published.

- Care must be taken that any links to external sites from the account are appropriate and safe.

- Any inappropriate comments on or abuse of school-sanctioned social media should immediately be removed and reported to a member of SLT.

- Staff should not engage with any direct messaging of students where the message is not public.

- All social media accounts created for educational purposes should include a link in the About or Info page to the ICT Acceptable Use Policy on the school website.