



QUORN HALL
SCHOOL

Electronic Communications and Use of Social Media Policy

Person Responsible:	Headteacher
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Last reviewed on:	1st June 2024
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Next review due by:	1st July 2025
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Created:	Cavendish Centralised Policy
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Revisions:	1st July 2022; 1st May 23;
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Quorn Hall School is part of Newcome Education, which is owned and operated by Cavendish Education.

This policy is one of a series of school policies that, taken together, are designed to form a comprehensive statement of the school's aspiration to provide an outstanding education for each of its pupils and of the mechanisms and procedures in place to achieve this. Accordingly, this policy should be read alongside these policies. In particular it should be read in conjunction with the policies covering equality and diversity, Health and Safety, safeguarding and child protection.

All of these policies have been written, not simply to meet statutory and other requirements, but to enable and evidence the work that the whole school is undertaking to ensure the implementation of its core values:

- **'Levelling up'** – We want our children to be able to meet appropriate milestones and age related expectations, socially, emotionally and academically.
- **Thrive not survive** – We want our children to thrive in school and society, not just survive their adverse childhood experiences.
- **Confidence** – Develop confidence in their abilities and self image/esteem as learners and members of society.
- **Creativity** – Foster individuality and celebrate differences and create a compassionate and accepting environment. Provide tools that give pupils options, voice, and choice in order to enable them to be creative.
- **Competence** – In their ability to self-regulate and interact with different types of people and overcome the challenges and traumas from the past.
- **Character** – Develop resilience so they see failures or negative situations as a learning opportunity by implementing a growth mindset approach.
- **Compassion** – For pupils and the challenging circumstances they have encountered in both their personal and educational lives.
- **Care** – To overtly demonstrate to pupils that adults do care about them and their futures – every day is a fresh start.

While this current policy document may be referred to elsewhere in Quorn Hall School documentation, including particulars of employment, it is non-contractual.

In the school's policies, unless the specific context requires otherwise, the word "parent" is used in terms of Section 576 of the [Education Act 1996](#), which states that a 'parent', in relation to a child or young person, includes any person who is not a biological parent but who has parental responsibility, or who has care of the child. Department for Education guidance [Understanding and dealing with issues relating to parental responsibility updated August 2023](#) considers a 'parent' to include:

- all biological parents, whether they are married or not

- any person who, although not a biological parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person – this could be an adoptive parent, a step-parent, guardian or other relative
- any person who, although not a biological parent and does not have parental responsibility, has care of a child or young person

A person typically has care of a child or young person if they are the person with whom the child lives, either full or part time and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their biological or legal relationship is with the child.

The school contracts the services of third-party organisations to ensure regulatory compliance and implement best practices for:

- HR and Employment Law
- Health & Safety Guidance
- DBS Check processing
- Mandatory Safeguarding, Health & Safety, and other relevant training
- Educare / National College (online CPD)
- Data protection and GDPR guidance
- Specialist insurance cover
- Neotas (Online searches / Social Media checks)
- VWV (legal)

Where this policy refers to ‘employees’, the term refers to any individual that is classified as an employee or a worker, working with and on behalf of the school (including volunteers and contractors).

Quorn Hall School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff, volunteers, pupils and visitors to share this commitment.

All outcomes generated by this document must take account of and seek to contribute to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people at Quorn Hall School.

The policy documents of Quorn Hall School are revised and published periodically in good faith. They are inevitably subject to revision. On occasions a significant revision, although promulgated in school separately, may have to take effect between the re-publication of a set of policy documents. Care should therefore be taken to ensure, by consultation with the Senior Leadership Team, that the details of any policy document are still effectively current at a particular moment.

Definitions

Cavendish Education encourages its employees to use electronic communication and social media platforms where it is efficient and appropriate to do so. However, it requires that employees are aware of their responsibilities, that they conduct themselves professionally in all communications and that they comply with this policy.

This policy deals with the use of email and all forms of social media including any interactive online media that allows parties to communicate with each other or to share data in a public forum including Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Google+, Wikipedia, Whatsapp, Whisper, Instagram, Vine, Tumblr to name a few. There are many more examples that could be listed in this rapidly changing area.

Serious breaches of this policy could lead to dismissal. Any employee who is unsure about whether something they propose to do might breach this policy should seek advice from their line manager.

Scope

This policy covers all employees, consultants, contractors, volunteers, interns, casual workers and agency workers in Cavendish Education and in all Cavendish Education schools.

It applies to the use of social media for business purposes as well as personal use that may affect our business in any way. The main areas of risk and responsibility are as follows:

- libellous statements in communications which Cavendish Education could be held responsible for
- malicious or inappropriate behaviour which could bring the company into disrepute;
- safeguarding; and
- privacy

Any reference made to 'Cavendish Education' within this policy applies to Cavendish Education and to any associated Cavendish Education school.

Compliance with related policies and agreements

Social media should never be used in a way that breaches any of our other policies. If an internet post would breach any of our policies in another forum, it will also breach them in an online forum. For example, you are prohibited from using social media to:

- breach the IT and electronic communications policy where one exists within a school
- breach our obligations with respect to the rules of relevant regulatory bodies
- breach the Disciplinary Policy or procedures
- breach any other laws or regulatory requirements.

Email

When using the email system to send messages externally, staff are required to ensure that their email is set to include the legal footer which provides our details. If you are unsure what this is, please seek advice from your line manager.

On this basis, sending messages externally using the email system is akin to writing a letter on headed paper. External emails carry Cavendish Education's name and we may be legally bound to the contents. Emails should be checked carefully before sending and should be treated like any other form of written communication and what is normally regarded as unacceptable in a letter is equally unacceptable in an email communication.

Employees should exercise care when forwarding an email or including additional recipients in a reply, to ensure that they are not disclosing confidential information to the wrong person. In particular, employees should be aware of all previous messages and attachments included in the email and should consider if these should be removed before forwarding.

Great care must be taken with confidential external emails. Given the inherent lack of security these emails should not normally be sent. If such information must be transmitted then it should be contained in a password protected attachment to an email, rather than in the main body of the email which is unprotected.

Employees should always be aware that all written communications, both internal and external, are liable to be called upon as a matter of public record, whether under a Subject Access Request, as part of an investigation by the school, Cavendish Education or an external authority, or as part evidence cited in cases of litigation. Accordingly, it is important that employees ensure that all their written communications are characterised by accuracy, discretion and decorum. This applies equally to emails and to posts on social media.

Personal Use of Social Media – Guidelines for responsible use

These guidelines are provided in conjunction with the information provided in this policy, with particular reference to the section 'Prohibited Use of Social Media'.

If you are using social media for personal use you should make it clear in social media postings, or in your personal profile, that you are speaking on your own behalf. Write in the first person and use a personal email address.

Be respectful to others when making any statement on social media and be aware that you are personally responsible for all communications which will be published on the internet for anyone to see. If you disclose your affiliation with us on your profile or in any social media postings, you must state that your views do not represent those of your employer (unless you are authorised to speak on our behalf as set out above).

You should also ensure that your profile and any content you post are consistent with the professional image you present to colleagues, parents and third parties. If you are uncertain or concerned about the appropriateness of any statement or posting, refrain from posting it until you have discussed it with your manager.

If you see social media content that disparages or reflects poorly on us, you should contact your line manager.

Staff must:

- ensure that, wherever possible, their privacy settings on social media sites are set so that pupils cannot access information relating to their personal lives
- obtain the prior written approval of the Head or their Line Manager, to the wording of any personal profile which you intend to create where the school is named or mentioned on a social networking site
- seek approval from the Head or their Line Manager before they speak about or make any comments on behalf of the school on the internet or through any social networking site
- report to their Head of Department or Line Manager immediately if they see any information on the internet or on social networking sites that disparages or reflects poorly on the school
- immediately remove any internet postings which are deemed by the school to constitute a breach of this or any other school policy
- consider whether a particular posting puts their effectiveness as a staff member at risk
- post only what they want the world to see

Staff must not:

- provide references for other individuals, on social or professional networking sites, as such references whether positive or negative can be attributed directly or indirectly to the school and create legal liability for both the author of the reference and the school

- with the exception of ‘retweeting’ or ‘liking’ official posts made from the school’s or Cavendish Education’s official account, staff must not post or publish on the internet or on any social networking site, any reference to the school, your colleagues, parents or pupils
- use commentary deemed to be defamatory, obscene, proprietary, or libellous. Staff must exercise caution with regards to exaggeration, colourful language, guesswork, obscenity, copyrighted materials, legal conclusions, and derogatory remarks or characterisations
- adopt or espouse political positions or opinions which may be identifiable to the employee
- discuss pupils or colleagues or publicly criticise the school, staff or pupils
- post images that include pupils
- initiate friendships with pupils on any personal social network sites
- accept pupils as friends on any such sites; staff must decline any pupil-initiated friend requests and inform pupils that they may only follow the official channels
- use social networking sites as part of the educational process e.g. as a way of reminding pupils about essay titles and deadlines

Prohibited use of social media

You must avoid making any social media communications that could damage your school, the company, our business and business interests or reputation, even indirectly. You must not use social media to:

- defame or disparage us, our employees or any third party
- to harass, bully or unlawfully discriminate against employees or third parties
- provide references for other individuals. Such references, positive and negative, can be attributed to the company and may create legal liability for both the author of the reference and the company
- communicate anti-government sentiment or political views as we are an apolitical organisation
- to make false or misleading statements
or
- to impersonate colleagues or third parties.

You must not express opinions on behalf of Cavendish Education, your school, or another school within Cavendish Education via social media, unless expressly authorised to do so by your line manager. You may be required to undergo training in order to obtain such authorisation. You must not post comments about sensitive business-related topics, such as our performance, or do anything to jeopardise our confidential information and intellectual property.

Unless posting from an authorised account run by an individual within the school or the wider organisation, you must not include our logos or other trademarks in any social media posting or in your profile on any social media.

The contact details of business contacts made during the course of your employment are our confidential information.

Business use of social media

If your duties require you to speak on behalf of your school or the company in a social media environment, you must still seek approval for such communication from a senior manager, who may require you to undergo training before you do so and impose certain requirements and restrictions with regard to your activities. Likewise, if you are contacted for comments about your school or the company for publication anywhere, including in any social media outlet, direct the enquiry to a senior manager and do not respond without written approval. The use of social media for business purposes is subject to the remainder of this policy.

Monitoring

We reserve the right to monitor, intercept and review, without further notice, employees activities using our IT resources and communications systems, including but not limited to social media postings and activities, to ensure that our rules are being complied with and for legitimate business purposes and you consent to such monitoring by your use of such resources and systems.

Recruitment

We may use internet searches to perform due diligence on candidates in the course of recruitment. Where we do this, we will act in accordance with our data protection and equal opportunities obligations.

Use of digital images

Any photos or videos taken by staff, other adults (including parents), and the pupils themselves during any school activity (including educational visits) should not be put on public display or published anywhere on the internet (including social networking websites).

The above excludes the publication of photos on the school's website and social media accounts, for the purpose of school-related publicity, and where used by the school for educational / display uses.

End of employment

If a member of staff's employment with the school should end, for whatever reason, any personal profiles on social networking sites should be immediately amended to reflect the fact that you are no longer employed or associated with the school.

All professional contacts that a member of staff has made through their course of employment with us belong to the school, regardless of whether or not the member of staff has made social media connections with them.

Accordingly, upon termination of employment, an employee shall hand over to the School the access rights to accounts, together with any work content or material, and any contacts or connections list.

Breach of this policy

Breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. Any employee suspected of committing a breach of this policy will be required to cooperate with our investigation, which may involve handing over relevant passwords and login details. You may be required to remove any social media content that we consider to constitute a breach of this policy. Failure to comply with such a request may in itself result in disciplinary action.

Review of implementation

The implementation of this Policy is reviewed annually by the school's Senior Leadership Team in consultation with staff and a report is made to the Governance Body.

The school may submit to Cavendish Education proposals for amendments to this Policy.