

# INTERNET SOCIAL NETWORKING POLICY FOR PUPILS

## *Definition of Social Networking*

*Social Networking applications include but are not limited to blogs, online discussion forums, collaborative spaces, media sharing services, micro-blogging applications. Examples include, but are not limited to X, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, You Tube, Google Meet and can also include instant messaging systems (SMS) such as Whatsapp, Google Chat and Microsoft Teams chat.*

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

1. The School recognises that Internet Social Networking sites are a useful way of interacting socially with friends and gathering information. The School accepts that pupils may use Social Networking applications on the Internet. While the School does not wish to discourage acceptable use of such sites on the Internet, we expect certain standards of conduct to be observed in order to protect:
  - The safety, welfare, confidentiality and dignity of staff, pupils, their families, and that of the wider community.
  - The reputation of the School.
2. The way in which pupils present themselves on Social Networking sites can have an impact on the public perception of the School and influence the way in which pupils and staff are perceived by the wider community. In their use of Social Networking sites, pupils should be aware that their online behaviour can affect their integrity and dignity.
3. To avoid boundaries becoming blurred and any potential misunderstanding, pupils should not use Social Networking sites to communicate with staff of the School unless using approved School communication channels.
4. This policy applies both on and off site. The following principles apply equally to information or comments posted by pupils from their home, personal, school computers or smart devices. This is irrespective of whether the posts are uploaded during school hours or in personal time.
5. The pupils are responsible for the content they publish on their Social Media accounts. This policy's primary aim is to provide pupils with guidance to keep them safe and avoid compromising situations which they later regret.

## 2.0 PROCEDURE

1. Pupils must not access Social Networking sites for personal use (TikTok etc.) during the academic day, unless otherwise specified by the relevant Assistant Head.
2. Use of any social media should be age appropriate and pupils should not misrepresent their date of birth to gain access to sites such as Instagram. It is not acceptable to clone someone else's identity or using a false identity to set up a profile.

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3. Pupils should not be 'friends' with staff on personal Social Networking sites as this could be viewed as a Safeguarding and Child Protection issue. Pupils may however, 'follow' or 'friend' official School accounts such as, but not limited to, @DHLINKS on X or their boarding house Instagram account.
4. Pupils should remember that their profiles on Social Networking sites could directly link their behaviour outside of School with the reputation of Downe House. Any online conduct that could bring the School into disrepute or cause a negative impact on the school community is forbidden.
5. Online behaviour that could, in the opinion of the School, cause distress or jeopardise the safety, confidentiality, dignity or reputation of others, whether part of the Downe House community or not, is not acceptable.
6. Pupils should take adequate precautions when using Social Networking sites and applications, both in vetting material that could be connected to them (e.g. through their own friendship profiles) and through the appropriate use of security settings. Appropriate security settings should be used to maintain privacy. Social Networking sites which hold personal information and that do not have security settings in place should be avoided.
7. Security settings on Social Networking sites such as Instagram should be reviewed regularly by the pupils as these providers often update their security policies which may allow unauthorised access to pupil profiles without them being fully aware of such changes.
8. Pupils should be aware that once content is shared online it is possible for it to be circulated more widely than intended without prior consent or knowledge (even if content is thought to have been deleted or privately shared).
9. Pupils should not post/tag comments, photographs, video, or other content about any member of the Downe House community without their express permission. Downe House must not be tagged as a location or mentioned in any Social Media posts, blogs, tweets etc.
10. It is not acceptable to produce any material that is offensive, defamatory, discriminatory, or inappropriate about the School, staff or other pupils. This includes the use of bad language and any form of cyber bullying.
11. Any legal breaches online such as posting nude images would be dealt with by the police and the sanctions would be carried out in line with the law.
12. The School will monitor IT systems and Social Media Sites as is deemed necessary to prevent or detect inappropriate usage.
13. Transcripts or screenshots of Social Networking communications may be used in any disciplinary proceedings.
14. If pupils become aware of misuse of Social Networking sites by another pupil, they should inform their Housemistress/master, Assistant Head of Section or member of the Leadership Team.
15. Pupils whose conduct breaches this policy in any way may be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the School's Behaviour and Discipline Policy.
16. This policy should be read in conjunction with the School's, 'Behaviour Management Policy' and 'IS: Acceptable Use Policy'.
17. It should be noted that online behaviour, deemed unsuitable by the Headmistress and in accordance with this policy, may have an impact on a pupil's future relationship with Downe House. This includes, but is not limited to, references, support from the Foundation and connections with the Downe House Seniors' Association.

### **3.0 Sanctions:**

In the judgement of the Headmistress, if a pupil is seen to bring the School into serious disrepute, or places the welfare, safety, dignity or reputation of others in jeopardy, whether or not they are members of the School community, the pupil will be:

1. Suspended

In the opinion of the Headmistress, pupils found using social media (including email) inappropriately may be sanctioned as follows:

1. Required to remove offensive content
2. Required to tell their parents over the telephone and/or in person
3. Have their internet access temporarily removed (if appropriate)
4. Will have their free time curtailed i.e. gated/community service during the week or weekend
5. Pupils with positions of responsibility may lose their posts temporarily or permanently as deemed appropriate by the Headmistress
6. Continuous offenders (3 times or more) will be required to see the Headmistress and their ability to continue to represent the School may be called into question.
7. Repeat offenders (3 times or more) will be internally suspended at the discretion of the Headmistress.

This policy makes reference to the following School policies, copies of which can be located on SchoolBase in the 'Documents' section:

Behaviour Management Policy (Reviewer: DH)  
IS: Acceptable Use Policy (Reviewer: DH)

### **Revision History:**

Revision	Date	Description of changes	Requested By
	June 2015-17	Reviewed	Areti Bizior
	January 2018	Removal of Email Policy reference	D McClymont
	January 2019	Reviewed	Areti Bizior
	January 2020	Reviewed – amendment highlighted in yellow	Areti Bizior
	January 2021	Reviewed	Michelle Scott
	January 2022	Reviewed – additions highlighted in yellow	Ellie Llewellyn
	January 2023	Reviewed	Ellie Llewellyn
	January 2024	Reviewed – additions highlighted in yellow	Ellie Llewellyn
	January 2025	Reviewed – additions highlighted in yellow	Ellie Llewellyn
	January 2026	Reviewed – amendment highlighted in yellow	Ellie Llewellyn

Review Leader: Director of Pupil Wellbeing  
Reviewed: January 2026  
Next Review: January 2027