

## **Social Media Policy and Guidelines**

### **Introduction**

The use of technology has become a significant component of many safeguarding issues. Child sexual exploitation; radicalisation; sexual predation: technology often provides the platform that facilitates harm. An effective approach to online safety empowers Progressive Sports to protect and educate the whole company in their use of technology and establishes mechanisms to identify, intervene in, and escalate any incident where appropriate. The breadth of issues classified within online safety is considerable, but can be categorised into three areas of risk:

- Content: being exposed to illegal, inappropriate, or harmful material; for example, pornography, fake news, racist or radical and extremist views
- Contact: being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users; for example, commercial advertising as well as adults posing as children or young adults
- Conduct: personal online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm; for example, making, sending, and receiving explicit images, or online bullying.

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

To capture the benefits offered by social media, Progressive Sports may explore and implement its use for company improvement and educational purposes. Working in within schools, requires us all to maintain professional boundaries in all forms of communication whether it involves electronic/digital technology.

This is vital to maintain public trust and appropriate professional relationships with children in our provisions. Our conduct inside or outside of work should not lead us to blur or cross those professional boundaries. This policy and the principles below are to help staff and individuals avoid the downside risks of using social media. The principles apply to any approved use of social media communication within the school or to personal use of social media outside of school.

### **Social Media – What is it?**

Social media means electronic communication software, applications (including those running on mobile devices including texting, SMS, and videos), e-mail and web sites, which enable users to interact, create and exchange information online. Examples include, but are not limited to, sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, as well as online discussion forums, blogs, other and the use of webcams.

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, the Malicious

Communications Act 1988, and other legislation. They must also operate in line with the company's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policies.

### **Access to Social Media Sites:**

Except for communication sites created by or approved by Progressive Sports for internal use, the company does not allow access to social networking websites from its tablets, computers or systems within the session times or staff to access via their own electronic devices.

### **Key Principles when Using Social Media Sites**

There are many legitimate uses of social media within the company to support the company's marketing plan.

For example, the company has an official Twitter, Facebook & Instagram accounts that require the use of social media.

However, when using social media, the boundaries between professional and personal can become more blurred and users can unwittingly or wittingly publish things they may later regret.

Published items can be capable of more than one interpretation but once published the damage may not be recoverable.

### **The golden principles:**

An individual is under a duty to:

- Maintain proper professional boundaries with children, parents and carers even when/if children, parents or carers initiate electronic interaction.
- Before posting items or communicating in social media to consider seriously whether the item would be said in public or shown in public or written for the public to read. If not, or if there is some doubt then it should not be posted because you may not be able to control who sees the information and how they interpret it.
- Be particularly aware of the guidelines when staff have external friendships with parents/carers, this is discouraged by Progressive Sports

### **An individual is under a duty not to:**

- Disclose confidential information without express authority especially about children, parents or carers, staff, voluntary or other workers within the company, nor breach their right to privacy.
- Engage in posts or activities which are detrimental to maintaining effective working relationships between individuals 'working' at Progressive Sports
- Bring the reputation of the company into disrepute.
- Engage in activities which compromise, or might be seen to compromise, the professional standards of the company.
- Share information with children or parents/carers in any environment that they would not willingly and appropriately share publicly.
- Post comments which incite others to make discriminatory or other professionally unacceptable comments.
- Post company logos or similar images that may lead readers of posts etc. to believe the individual is speaking on behalf of the company.

Items placed on social networking sites will be regarded as having been posted in the public domain. Thus, it is very important to be careful when using social media personally.

## **Effective practices when using social media sites:**

Members of staff should:

- Use caution when posting information on social networking sites and other online forums.
- Consider refraining from identifying themselves as working for the company as posted content could bring the company into disrepute.
- Take care that their interaction on social media does not damage working relationships between members of staff, children at the setting they work in, their families and other stakeholders and/or working partners of the company.
- Avoid exchanging private texts, phone numbers, personal email addresses or photos of a personal nature with children/parents or carers.
- Decline children/parent/carer initiated 'friend' requests and not issue 'friend' requests to children/parent/carers nor communicate with children/parent/carer on any social network site or similar website or forum.
- Maintain a formal, courteous, and professional tone in all communications with children/parent/carer to ensure that professional boundaries are maintained.
- If posting an item about an aspect of the company, for which you have express permission from a company Director, make it clear that any personal views are not necessarily those of the company.
- Staff should not accept any child under the age of 18 as a friend, follower, subscriber or similar on any personal social media account. Manage the privacy and security settings of your social media accounts. Privacy settings can shift and change without notice. Check the settings frequently.
- Ensure that privacy settings for content/photos are set appropriately and monitor who can post to your social media locations and view what you post. You should not allow children to view or post on those locations.
- Protect yourself from identity theft by restricting the amount of personal information that you give out. Be cautious about posting detailed personal information such as date of birth, place of birth and favourite football team, which can form the basis of security questions and passwords and enable personal details to be cloned for fraudulent acts etc and grooming.

## **The following activities must not be undertaken:**

- Bullying and harassment – such conduct against any colleagues via social media sites is taken as seriously as workplace bullying and harassment. Any allegations will be dealt with under the company's normal bullying and harassment and/or disciplinary policies and may be treated as a criminal offence in certain circumstances.
- Incitement of racial or religious hatred or similar activities – these may lead to criminal investigations and penalties.
- Posting libellous statements – an individual may be legally liable for any damage to the reputation of the individual concerned. As a representative of the company, any statement made by an employee could mean the company is vicariously liable for defamatory statements if carried out in the normal course of employment, even if performed without the consent or approval of the company. Similarly, making such statements on your own initiative and not at work could mean you face legal action.
- Grooming children or similar activities to develop an inappropriate relationship(s)
- Bring the company's reputation into disrepute.
- Compromising the security of the company's systems
- Breaching confidential information about the company or any of its customers, staff or other individuals associated with the company. Don't publish anything that might allow inferences to be drawn which could embarrass or damage a customer or employee.
- Breaches of copyright or other similar infringements – passing on text, photos etc; may infringe the owner's copyright. Always ensure that you have the permission of the owner.

Progressive Sports takes the matters above seriously and disciplinary action will be taken. If substantiated, the normal outcome will be dismissal. A very serious view will also be taken of any individual who ignores or wilfully or carelessly carries out actions or omits to act which results in breaches of the instructions and advice contained in this policy and the result is for example, undermining effective working relationships, professional boundaries between individuals and children similar examples in this policy.

### **Feeling aggrieved or concerned about matters at work:**

When you feel that unfair decision has been made or that malpractice is occurring what can you do?

What you should not do is post your feelings online, which are likely to be impulsive, inappropriate, or heated comments. Those may lead you into being part of the problem. Instead, you can use several routes:

- Whistle blowing procedure - for allegations of organisational malpractice or corruption. Following this procedure provides protection against dismissal and other sanctions if you disclose matters in the ways set out in the procedure. Posting comments first will mean you forfeit your legal protection.
- Grievance procedure - if you feel aggrieved by a decision within the company that affects you personally.

### **Dealing with inappropriate contact or material/comments:**

If an individual becomes aware of inappropriate material/comments they should notify the Head Office as soon as possible, and if possible, provide print outs of the comments made.

If a child makes 'social' or inappropriate contact with an employee, the individual must notify the Designated Safeguarding Lead as soon as possible without making a response.

Similarly, if any member of staff or individual associated with the company makes unintended contact with a child, the incident must be notified to the Designated Safeguarding Lead as soon as possible.

Progressive Sports can then deal with the situation as appropriate.

Refer to the company's Safeguarding Policy if the incident gives rise to potential or actual safeguarding concerns.

### **Monitoring of internet and mobile device access:**

All mobile phones must be locked away during working hours. Only onsite supervisors should have access to a mobile phone during work hours, for Head Office contact only.

Any parents/children onsite with a phone visible during a Progressive Sports, must be asked to put the phone away immediately.

### **Final Reminders:**

As noted at the outset, social media is a useful means of communication. Because of its ease of access and familiarity, it can lead us to unwittingly overstep the boundaries of professional standards and conduct towards children or work colleagues. When using social media, individuals should remember that the company are subject to various expectations.

**Please remember that when using such media to:**

- Ensure that no information is made available that could provide a person with unauthorised access to the company, its systems and/or any confidential information.
- Not post any confidential information regarding the company on any social networking website.

**We ask all individuals to consider the following before posting information or images on social networking sites:**

- Think carefully before posting information – would you want the person concerned or your employer or potential employer to see it?
- Review your posted information regularly – what may have seemed like a good idea at the time may not seem such a good idea some months or years later.