



## Social Media – Code of Conduct Policy

Approved by the TCES Operational Board  
On behalf of Thomas Keaney, CEO and Schools' Proprietor

**Date of next formal review, September 2024**

This policy applies to TCES National Online School

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## Purpose

TCES National Online School understands the benefits of using social media; however, if misused, the school community can be negatively affected, such as damage to the school's reputation.

This code of conduct sets out clear procedures for how we expect parents to conduct themselves on social media, when using messenger apps, and our school platforms, with regards to the school and its reputation.

For the fullness of clarity, this code of conduct does not seek to censor the experiences of families or to prevent families from documenting reviews through the appropriate channels. The school does encourage families to contact the school in the first instance, regarding their experiences, prior to posting online.

We ask that parents read this document, complete the declaration form and ensure that they always act in accordance with the stipulations detailed below.

## Definitions and Scope

TCES National Online School defines social media as 'any websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking'.

Social networking sites and tools include, but are not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, TikTok, LinkedIn, Telegram, YouTube, and Instagram. It also includes forums and discussion boards such as Google Groups, online encyclopaedias such as Wikipedia, and any other websites which allow individual users or organisations to use simple publishing tools. The school also includes review sites such as Trustpilot and Google Reviews in the scope of this policy.

## Legal Framework

This document has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Data Protection Act 2018
- UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012

This document operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Anti-bullying Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Complaints Policy
- E-safety / Acceptable Use / ICT Policy
- Safeguarding Policy

## Online Safety and Social Media Conduct

TCES National Online School expects parents and carers to behave in a civilised nature online and will not tolerate any of the following online behaviour:

- Posting defamatory content about parents/carers, pupils, the school, or its employees.
- Complaining about the school's values and methods on social media.
- Posting content containing confidential information regarding the school or any members of its community, e.g., the complaints process from beginning to end, including disclosing the outcome of the complaint.
- Contacting school employees through social media, including requesting to 'follow' or 'friend' them, or sending them private messages.
- Creating or joining private groups or chats that victimise or harass a member of staff or the school in general.
- Posting images of any staff members or pupils without their prior consent.

Parents'/carers' social media usage will be in accordance with the school's E-Safety, Acceptable Use ICT Policy. TCES National Online School retains the right to request that any damaging material is removed from social media websites, either by the pupil, parent/carer or by the relevant social media company. If parents/carers wish to raise a complaint, the school has a Complaints procedure in place.

Breaches of this code of conduct will be taken seriously by the school and could ultimately lead to expulsion of the pupil. In the event of illegal, defamatory, or discriminatory content, breaches could lead to prosecution. Parents/carers are instructed not to post anonymously or under an alias to evade the guidance given in this code of conduct.

## Online Communications and Messaging

TCES National Online School expects that parents/carers will use messaging apps, such as WhatsApp, and permitted school platforms for purposes beneficial to themselves and the school; however, will not accept any of the following behaviour:

- Sending abusive messages to fellow parents/carers.
- Sending messages, abusive or otherwise, to members of staff. All communications to school staff must be sent via the permitted school platforms.
- Sending abusive messages about members of staff, parents/carers, pupils, or the school.
- Sharing confidential or sensitive information about members of staff, parents/carers, pupils, or the school.
- Bringing the school or its staff into disrepute.

The school appreciates the simplicity and ease of keeping in contact with staff, where necessary, through our school platforms. We are happy to help families with queries and concerns within working hours, and within the timescales outlined to families. TCES National Online School does not, however, condone parents/carers sending frequent and unimportant messages to staff on our school platforms. Parents/carers should understand that staff should not be contacted outside of working hours. If parents/carers wish to talk to staff,

parents/carers should arrange a meeting with the teacher by getting in contact with the teacher via the permitted school platforms.

Should any problems arise from contact over messaging apps, or via permitted school platforms, the school will act quickly by contacting parents/carers directly, to stop any issues continuing. TCES National Online School can request a meeting with parents/carers if any misconduct, such as sending abusive messages or posting defamatory content, occurs online. TCES National Online School does not support communications between parents/carers and school staff without the permitted school platforms. Our staff will aim to respond to communications within 2 working days. Teachers may not respond to communications out of term time.

TCES National Online School complaints procedure will be followed as normal if any members of school staff cause any issues through their conduct whilst using online messaging, either on or outside the permitted school platforms.

The Executive Headteacher can, with the permission of the parent/carer, view messages sent between parents/carers to deal with problems quickly and effectively.

The Executive Headteacher can request that 'group chats' are closed down should any problems continue between parents/carers or between parents/carers and the school.

## **Photography and Images**

TCES National Online School online classes are used by our whole school community, and every person, and their identity, must be respected. Parents'/carers' permission is required for any content to be shared with our wider community.

Parents/carers and pupils must not take screenshots of online sessions, live, or recorded, and must not post these online. In any other session, parents/carers must not take photos of other children, staff members, contractors, or volunteers. Any images or videos must not be posted on social media without the consent of those within the images or, where applicable, their parents/carers.

In the event of in-person events, parents/carers may be permitted to take photos of their own children and should only share photos of their own children on social media. Any photographs or videos taken, containing other people's children, or members of school staff, contractors or volunteers must not be posted online without the express permission of all present in the images or videos.

## **Responsibility of Parents and Carers**

Parents/carers are responsible for supporting the school by monitoring their own use of social media and online messaging. Examples of positive practice on social media for parents/carers are as follows:

- Positive contributions to TCES National Online School's social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, are welcomed.

- Any concerns or issues about the school, its pupils or staff should be expressed directly to the school and not be voiced on social media.
- Parents/carers must obtain permission before posting pictures that contain other parents or their children, unless sharing or liking a post from the school's official social media account.
- If parents/carers become aware of inappropriate use of social media by their own or other people's children, they should contact the school so that the school can work with the parents/carers to educate young people on safe and appropriate behaviour.
- If parents/carers become aware of the inappropriate use of social media by other parents/carers or school staff, they should inform the school so that steps can be taken to remedy the situation.

Parents/carers are responsible for ensuring they support the school by monitoring their children's use of social media and online messaging. Parents/carers must support their children in adhering to the school's Behaviour policy. Examples of best practice in ensuring children and young people's safe and responsible behaviours when using social media and other online sites are as follows:

- Pupils use of social media must comply with the school's Safeguarding Policy, Behaviour Policy, E-safety, Acceptable Use ICT Policy, and Anti-bullying Policy.
- Pupils must not access any social media that is for adults only or if the pupil does not meet the minimum age requirement.
- Anonymous sites must not be accessed as there is a high risk that inappropriate comments can be exchanged, causing distress or endangerment.
- Bad, including offensive, explicit, or abusive, language and inappropriate pictures must never be included in messages.
- All messages should be positive or constructive, and not include anything that could be upsetting or defamatory towards others or the school.
- Pupils must take responsibility for keeping details of their accounts private, using full privacy settings, and logging off properly and not allowing others to use their accounts.
- Pupils must report anything offensive or upsetting that they see online to the appropriate bodies, either by using the "report abuse" tabs (or equivalent) or by speaking to their parents/carers or a member of staff.
- It is a serious offence to use another person's account, or to create an account in another person's name without their consent.
- Pupils should not regard anything posted online as private and should remember that harassment, defamatory attitudes, racism, and homophobia are just some issues which could lead to prosecution.
- An individual's "Digital Footprint" is becoming increasingly significant when it comes to job and university applications. If unfortunate decisions are made, it will be extremely difficult, perhaps impossible, to eliminate the evidence.
- If pupils see inappropriate postings by other pupils, they must inform the school so that steps can be taken to avoid possible repercussions.

- The Malicious Communications Act applies to social media interaction by pupils, staff, and parents/carers of the school.

### **Monitoring and Review**

The Executive Headteacher and Heads of School will review this code of conduct on an annual basis and will communicate any changes to all teachers and parents. Events arising in the intervening period may result in more frequent changes. Parents and carers will be notified of such updates.

The next scheduled review date for this document is September 2024.