

INSPIRES MAT

Parental behaviour and appropriate use of Social Media Policy

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To be issued to parents/uploaded to school website

All stakeholders are responsible for protecting the Trust, School and colleagues' reputations

Statement of intent

Inspires MAT believes staff, parents/carers and children are entitled to a safe and protective environment in which the school conducts itself. Behaviour that will cause harassment, alarm or distress to users of the premises is contrary to the aims of Inspires MAT and the schools it serves.

Inspires MAT will not tolerate threatening, abusive or insulting words and behaviour by people attending the school. Physical attacks and threatening behaviour, abusive or insulting language to staff, committee members, parents and carers, children and other users of the premises will result in suspension. This also includes abusive and insulting language used on phones or any written communication.

Aim

At Inspires MAT, we believe that a strong partnership between parents and the school is essential for the success and wellbeing of our pupils. We are committed to fostering a positive and respectful environment where open communication and mutual respect are paramount.

We encourage all parents to engage with the school community in a constructive and supportive manner. This includes:

- **Respectful Communication:** We ask that all interactions with staff, pupils, and other parents are conducted with respect and courtesy. Constructive feedback and concerns should be communicated through appropriate channels.
- **Positive Role Modelling:** Parents are role models for their children. Demonstrating positive behaviour and respectful interactions sets a valuable example for our pupils.
- **Supportive Engagement:** We value the involvement of parents in school activities and events. Your active participation and support contribute to a vibrant and inclusive school community.
- **Responsible Use of Social Media:** We encourage parents to use social media responsibly, ensuring that any online interactions reflect the values of our school. This includes refraining from sharing negative or harmful comments about the school, staff, or pupils.

By working together, we can create a supportive and respectful environment that benefits the entire school community.

Methods

Following an incident of misconduct which does not adhere to the aims of this policy, the Head teacher can suspend a child and/or their parent for the remainder of the day, with immediate effect. The Head teacher must inform the CEO, who in turn will inform the Chair of Trustees as soon as possible with a written report of the circumstances. The Head teacher can extend the suspension as long as is deemed appropriate and will

inform the parent accordingly either in writing or by telephone.

Having interviewed any staff and any other witnesses present, the Head teacher will then inform the CEO, describing the incident and any action taken. Written notes of interviews must be made. Where suspension is warranted based on the evidence provided it will be upheld.

Should evidence not support suspension or a complaint raised the CEO will then be responsible for taking the necessary action required to resolve any complaints. The CEO can delegate their position to another member of the Central Team if it is felt more appropriate.

The CEO or Central Team staff member may invite the offending parent/carer for an interview if it is deemed necessary and evidence suggests suspension was not warranted. Should this be the case, the CEO or Central Team staff member must be accompanied at the interview by the Head teacher or another staff/Committee member who is not directly involved. The parent/carer is permitted to bring a person of their choice to the interview as well. An agreed written record of the discussion will be made for the official complaints' records. All of the parties present at the meeting must sign the record and be in receipt of a copy of the document.

A mediator will keep all discussions confidential and can hold separate meetings with school personnel and the parent, if this is decided to be helpful. The mediator keeps an agreed written record of any meetings that are held and of any advice they give.

Social Media

Social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and X are now widely used. This type of media allows people to communicate in ways that were not previously possible. However, such sites can be inappropriately used by some as a means of expressing negative or offensive views about schools and their staff. This section sets out Inspires MAT's approach to parental use of such sites and sets out the procedures we will follow and action we may take when we consider that parents have used such facilities inappropriately. When we have referred to "parent" in this section, we also include carers; relatives; or anyone associated with the School.

Appropriate use of social networking sites by parents

Social networking sites have potential to enhance the learning and achievement of pupils and enable parents to access information about the School and provide feedback efficiently and easily. In addition, Inspires MAT recognises that many parents and other family members will have personal social networking accounts, which they might use to discuss/share views about school issues with friends and acquaintances. As a guide,

individuals should consider the following prior to posting any information on social networking sites about the School, its staff, its pupils, or anyone else associated with the School:

- Is the social networking site the appropriate channel to raise concerns, give this feedback or express these views?
- Would private and confidential discussions with the School be more appropriate? E.g. if there are serious allegations being made/concerns being raised. Social media/internet sites should not be used to name individuals and make abusive comments about those people. Please contact the school to discuss any concerns you may have.
- Are such comments likely to cause emotional or reputational harm to individuals which would not be justified, particularly if the School has not yet had a chance to investigate a complaint?
- The reputational impact that the posting of such material may have to the School; any detrimental harm that the School may suffer as a result of the posting; and the impact that such a posting may have on pupils' learning.

Inappropriate use of social networking sites by parents

Although social networking sites may appear to be the quickest and easiest way to express frustrations or concerns about the School (and those associated with it), it is rarely appropriate to do so. Other channels, such as a private and confidential discussion with the School, or using the School's formal complaints process are much better suited to this.

The School considers the following examples to be inappropriate uses of social networking sites. (This list is non-exhaustive and intended to provide examples only):

- Making allegations about staff or pupils at the School/cyber-bullying;
- Making complaints about the School/staff at the School;
- Making defamatory statements about the School or staff at the School;
- Posting negative/offensive comments about specific pupils/staff at the School;
- Posting racist comments;
- Posting comments which threaten violence.

Parents should also ensure that their children are not using social networking/internet sites in an inappropriate manner. It is expected that parents explain to their children what is acceptable to post online. Parents are also expected to monitor their children's online activity, including in relation to their use of social media and ensure they adhere to the terms of use and age restrictions.

Procedure Inspires MAT will follow if inappropriate use continues

Inspires MAT and the schools it serves will always try to deal with concerns raised by parents in a professional and appropriate manner and understands that parents may not always realise when they have used social networking sites inappropriately.

Therefore, as a first step, Headteacher's of schools within Inspires MAT will usually discuss the matter with the parent to try and resolve the matter and to ask that the relevant information be removed from the social networking site in question. If the parent refuses to do this and continues to use social networking sites in a manner the School considers inappropriate, the School will consider taking the following action:

- Take legal advice and/or legal action where the information posted is defamatory in any way or if the circumstances warrant this;
- Set out the School's concerns to you in writing, giving you a warning and requesting that the material in question is removed;
- Contact the Police where the School feels it appropriate – for example, if it considers a crime (such as harassment) has been committed; or in cases where the posting has a racial element, is considered to be grossly obscene or is threatening violence;
- If the inappropriate comments have been made on a school website or online forum, the School may act to block or restrict that individual's access to that website or forum;
- Contact the host/provider of the Social Networking site to complain about the content of the site and ask for removal of the information;
- Suspend the poster from the school site to protect the staff and children the school serves;
- Take other legal action against the individual.

Complaints following decision

Should parents have any concerns over the way a complaint has been handled they may wish to follow the school complaints procedure.