

(OSC) Social Media and Electronic Communication Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This policy is intended to minimise the risks of social media which can impact on the wellbeing of staff, students and volunteers, and the reputation of OSC, so that staff can enjoy the benefits of social media both at work and in their personal life whilst understanding the standards of conduct expected by OSC, and considerations when using social media in a personal capacity. Students may, of course, be part of a church at which an OSC volunteer is also an organiser. Please be very clear that if you are working as a church volunteer or employee then your church Social Media Policy will apply to your communications with the young people involved. *However, if you are working as an OSC volunteer, then the OSC Social Media Policy must be followed for OSC activities. Communication with young people will only be permitted using an OSC work mobile phone, not with a personal mobile phone.*
- 1.2 It must be observed by all who work or volunteer for OSC in any capacity but particularly by those who have contact with young people in schools. The Co-Director, Development is responsible for ensuring that all new members of staff and volunteers are made aware of the policy during their induction.
- 1.3 This policy addresses all forms of electronic communication including but not limited to Facebook, WhatsApp, email and mobile phones, which are explicitly considered. The principles outlined in Section 2 and in the following sections about specific means of electronic communication should be applied more generally to other forms including instant messaging, which is ever changing. Team members should raise any queries about other media with their line manager or the Co-Director, Development. It is anticipated that communications to young people via Social Media will mainly occur for anything CU/CU leader related. Oxford Schools Chaplaincy works primarily in schools with the primary routes of communication being with the teacher in charge or in person with students within a public or classroom setting.
- 1.4 This policy should be read in conjunction with other relevant OSC policies including our Safeguarding Policy, Data Protection Policy (GDPR), WhatsApp Guidelines, and our Lesson Guidelines sent out to all volunteers ahead of lessons.
- 1.5 Implementation of this policy is overseen on a day-to-day basis by the Office and Volunteers' Administrator.

2 General principles

- 2.1 Staff and volunteers' lives provide a role model for the young people who know them, meaning that the way the OSC team behave, speak and treat others online is just as important as how they act face to face. Digital lives should reflect the message OSC is looking to share and any failure to do so will be taken very seriously; section 2.12 refers. It is understood that posts made by others on an individual's social media platform can be out of their control, but every effort should be made to remove immediately anything deemed inappropriate.
- 2.2 As the use and popularity of social media grows, the line between what is public and professional can become blurred. It is important therefore that staff and volunteers are aware that their personal digital activity could have an adverse impact on their professional role or OSC's image and reputation. Even if they do not expressly name OSC as their employer on social media, this policy will still apply if a connection with your employment can be reasonably made. Specifically, staff and volunteers must not post, encourage, support or link to any of the following:
- Abusive or threatening language
 - Inappropriate comments or material that may be regarded as discriminatory, offensive, bullying or harassment for example by making offensive or derogatory comments relating to sex, gender reassignment, race (including nationality) disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief or age;
 - False or misleading statements that could have a negative effect on OSC's reputation
 - an unlawful act
- This could include content you share or like as this could suggest you approve of that content
- 2.3 Staff and volunteers must take great care to avoid using personal social media accounts or email addresses to communicate with the young people with whom OSC is working. If it is absolutely essential to communicate with a young person via electronic means, this must be done using an OSC email address, a specially created school email address, or an OSC work account, copied to the Co-Director, Development of OSC.
- 2.4 All staff and volunteers must obtain specific permission from their line manager or the Co-Director, Development to engage in electronic communication with a young person and must also keep them informed of the messages that are being sent. The school and/or parents should also be aware of and comfortable with the

situation and if they request that communication should not be conducted in this way, this must be respected. Permission to communicate via electronic media will only be given if this is seen as essential, with no other forms of communication available.

- 2.5 Electronic media should be used only for genuine reasons relating to work with a young person. It is never appropriate to have private, non-work related contact via electronic media with a young person with whom OSC is working.
- 2.6 Staff and volunteers should not initiate communication or respond to a young person between 9pm and 8am unless that young person is at immediate risk of harm from others or themselves and there is no alternative means of communication.
- 2.7 When communicating with a young person, staff and volunteers should take great care to avoid language that might give the wrong impression or create misunderstanding, especially when using the informal language and shorthand often used in texts and other electronic means.
- 2.8 Only photos/videos for which OSC has permission from schools and parents to publish should be posted on social media and our website.
- 2.9 Staff and volunteers should take care when using electronic media in the context of their church and in particular be mindful that their church's policy may differ from OSC's. They should follow the policy of the church but speak first to their line manager or the OSC Co-Director, Development if they are in any doubt as to whether this would be inconsistent with OSC policy. In the same manner, should a member of staff or volunteer know a young person on a personal level (e.g. their child, a child's friend or a friend's child), they should inform their line manager or the OSC Director, who will decide appropriate steps to maintain transparency within the team.
- 2.10 Once a young person has left school and turned 18, it is acceptable to contact them using personal social media accounts, emails and phone, as long as that person is not considered to be a 'vulnerable adult'. Care should be taken to maintain the standards set in 2.1 and 2.2.
- 2.11 It is acceptable for staff and volunteers to contact school staff and/or other OSC volunteers via personal social media, email and phone. However, boundaries should still be respected and thought given to the particular means used for work-related communications (e.g. teachers may not appreciate a Facebook message about booking a lesson). If a staff member/ OSC colleague gives permission for

personal contact, it is advisable to have a prior conversation defining boundaries (e.g. would you prefer I contact you via WhatsApp or via email and outside or during work hours?)

- 2.12 All members of the OSC team are expected to maintain high standards of professional behaviour at all times. Staff or volunteers should never publish anything that is inappropriate or confidential to OSC such as using social media to comment on potentially sensitive matters, including, but not restricted to, information about students and information intended for internal use only. Anyone failing to maintain these standards will be warned by the Co-Director, Development in the first instance. In the event of repetition or if the initial occurrence was particularly serious, a staff member would be subject to the disciplinary procedure set out in their contract of employment; a volunteer might be asked to stop working with OSC.

3 Safeguarding

- 3.1 This policy should be read in conjunction with OSC's Safeguarding Policy and Procedures. Any allegations made online or concerns raised relating to safeguarding issues should be reported immediately to the OSC Co-Director, Development to be dealt with in accordance with this policy.
- 3.2 Once an allegation has been made or a concern has arisen, staff and volunteers should not use electronic media to discuss or follow up the matter in any way.

4 Facebook

- 4.1 OSC has a Facebook page (www.facebook.com – search: 'Oxford Schools Chaplaincy') which is primarily intended to: promote connections between supporters (including supporting churches) and OSC. It is also to provide space for discussion and debate about Christianity or other topics generated by OSC activities; promote OSC events, also events run by churches and other organisations in support of OSC's vision and programme.
- 4.2 All OSC staff are permitted to be 'administrators' enabling them to post statuses, create events and respond to private messages as OSC rather than themselves. Should the need arise, the Co-Director, Development has discretion to agree this level of permission for a volunteer.
- 4.3 Staff and volunteers can 'like' the page, comment on statuses, share posts or events, using their personal account. However, this is strongly discouraged as use of a personal account may result in new friend requests from young people, which cannot be accepted (section 2.3 refers).

5 Emailing (including responding to messages on website)

- 5.1 OSC staff and volunteers should request the email address of a young person only with permission from their line manager and/or the Co-Director, Development, and also from the school. There may be occasions when this is necessary to send details of an event, a course, CU etc. For accountability purposes email messages should be bcc'd to the Co-Director, Development, saved and shared with the line manager or the Co-Director, Development – section 2.4 refers, and this should be the young person's school email address wherever possible.

- 5.2 A reply should be sent as soon as possible when a question is received via the OSC website/Facebook page or on the back of a lesson, having first made the Volunteers' Administrator or Co-Director, Development aware of the contact and checking that the answer is appropriate and accurate.
- 5.3 Any email addresses of young people should only be used for the purposes outlined where permission was obtained. For example, an email address should not be used to video message a young person without specific permission to do so.

6 Mobile phones

- 6.1 Personal phone numbers should not be given out to young people or personal phone numbers of young people obtained only when really necessary and with specific permission from the Co-Director, Development and from the school and/or parents of the young person.
- 6.2 Particular care should be taken with the language used when messaging – section 2.7 refers.
- 6.3 Staff and volunteers may only join groups on WhatsApp (or similar Instant Messaging Apps with closed group facilities) with young people known through OSC's work in schools by adhering to the 'OSC WhatsApp Guidance' document. How this applies to groups set up by a team member's church must be considered on a case by case basis – section 2.9 refers

7 Technology Changes

- 7.1 Electronic communication is constantly changing, and new Social Media platforms and Apps regularly enter the technological world. OSC will also endeavour to move with the times and will regularly review the appropriateness and effectiveness of the platforms we use. With new Apps, the general principles outlined in this policy should apply and as in all cases, if there is any doubt, staff and volunteers should speak to their line manager or the Co-Director, Development before engaging in communication with young people online.