

Ras Al Khaimah American Academy				
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## **Introduction**

At RAKAA, we recognize that social media now plays a significant part in our day-to-day lives. Many of our stakeholders have their own personal accounts on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and many other social media platforms. When used correctly, we understand that all of these platforms can be used in very positive ways. All members of the RAKAA community must be careful and aware of their conduct when using these platforms and communicating online.

## **Rationale**

With the ever-increasing availability of social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and many others, the ways in which we can communicate, engage and learn from each other has changed dramatically over the past 15 years. As social media is now so ingrained in our everyday lives, it is of the utmost importance that if you have a personal profile on any social media platform, you are aware of your conduct and behavior while using them and your responsibility to RAKAA. As a staff member, you share in representing the school positively. We must all remain aware that any content posted online can, when matched with an individual's photograph or identity, reflect not just upon that user but also on the school and their colleagues.

This policy aims to guide and inform all staff at RAKAA of the school's expectations concerning their professional responsibilities when posting on social media. It aims to highlight positive uses of social media while also addressing what is considered unacceptable.

**Our roles as educators and support workers within an educational setting require each of us to ensure that we maintain professional boundaries regardless of the communication method used, whether digital/electronic, via telephone, or even face-to-face. It is vitally important that, as a school, RAKAA can maintain public trust and foster appropriate relationships with the students in our care. Our conduct, both on campus and outside of work, must not lead us to blur or cross any lines with regard to our professional boundaries.**

All employees at RAKAA are allowed to access any social media site, but no one can access this while on-site as the school has firewalls in place for its protection. Outside of regular working hours, staff must make sure that any use of social media is in accordance with the RAKAA Acceptable Use Policy and RAKAA Unacceptable Use Policy.

The advice contained within this policy aims to guide staff members at RAKAA on the best way to access social media safely and highlight the risks involved while using it. As RAKAA does not allow access to social media sites within the school for most staff, bar the official poster, these guidelines are primarily to guide personal social media use outside of school.

## Key Principles when Using Social Media Sites

### **The Golden Principals**

Members of staff at RAKAA have a responsibility to:

- Ensure that they maintain proper professional boundaries when communicating with students and their parents, even if the contact has been initiated by the student/parent.
- Think carefully prior to posting items online or communicating on a social media forum. Would the content or comment be said, shown in public, or written down for others to see/read in a public forum? If the answer is no or there is any doubt, then the user must refrain from posting the content as they may not be able to control how the information is seen or interpreted by others.
- Ensure that they are aware of the RAKAA guidelines concerning staff having an external friendship with any parents at the school.

### **All members of staff at RAKAA are under a duty not to:**

- Reveal or disclose **any** confidential information concerning students, parents, staff, and other members of the RAKAA community or breach their right to privacy without express written authority which will only be granted by the Principal or Head of Human Resources.
- Participate in posts or activities that can be deemed as being detrimental to maintaining effective working relationships with other members of the RAKAA community.
- Post any content or materials that could bring the reputation of RAKAA into disrepute.
- Post any content or engage in any activities which might compromise or appear to compromise the professional standards of teaching or the professional standards that apply to support staff.
- Share any information with a student or their parent in any environment they would not share in a school or school-related setting.
- Post any content that would encourage or incite other users to make discriminatory or otherwise unacceptable comments.
- Post content containing school logos or similar images that could lead anyone reading the post to believe that the user is speaking on behalf of RAKAA.

Any content or item placed on any social media networking site will be classed as having been posted in the public domain. So it is of the utmost importance that all users remain careful when using social media personally.

The following advice is intended to help staff members at RAKAA avoid breaking any of the golden rules above.

## **2. Effective practices when using social media sites**

### **All RAKAA members of staff should:**

- Think carefully before posting information online to online forums or social media sites.

- Decide whether they wish to identify themselves as working for RAKAA as any posted content could ultimately bring the school into disrepute.
- Ensure that interactions on social media platforms do not damage any working relationships with other staff members or stakeholders at the school.
- Ensure that they maintain all professional standards by communicating with student and their parents electronically at appropriate times of the day through the school-sanctioned platforms such as Microsoft Teams. There should be no communications via personal profiles.
- Staff **MUST** avoid sharing or exchanging private messages, texts, phone numbers, personal e-mail addresses, or any photos of a personal nature with any student or parent.
- Any friendship or follow request from any student or parent on any social media platform **MUST** be declined and reported to the OSL.
- Staff must not follow any student or parent on social media sites as there is too significant a risk of falling foul of professional boundaries.
- It is essential that all staff maintain a formal, professional, and courteous tone in any communication with students or their parents in order to ensure that professional boundaries are maintained.
- Staff members at RAKAA should refrain from accepting friendships or follow requests from ex-students under the age of 18 if they are aware of younger siblings within the school, as this exposes the staff member to risk.

***It is crucial that you manage the privacy and settings on all your social media accounts. Stay aware of any changes made to these settings and update them regularly, as providers can change them without notice.***

- When adjusting your privacy setting for any content or photos that you post, make sure that you monitor who can see your posts and who is allowed to comment on your content. Do NOT allow any students to view or post on any of these platforms.
- Be aware of how to protect yourself and your identity while using social media platforms. Restrict the amount of personal data you upload to the sites. Remember, if you post details of your date of birth, your place of birth, your favorite sports team, or any hint of your address, then you are leaving yourself available to be cloned for fraudulent or malicious acts or even cases of grooming.
- When posting pictures of yourself, try to ensure that you do not include any hint of where you work, as this can be used to identify you and the school and expose you to problems should malicious acts take place,

**All staff at RAKAA must not undertake the following activities while using their social media platforms:**

- Any form of bullying or harassment of any kind is entirely unacceptable at RAKAA. If a staff member displays any such comments or posts on their social media about another colleague, it will be taken just as seriously as if there was workplace bullying and harassment. All reports of bullying and harassment will be investigated following the school's established disciplinary policies and may be treated as a criminal offense under certain circumstances.

- Staff must ensure that any content posted online does not encourage any kind of hatred, whether it is racial, religious, or other similar situations. Again, these lead to criminal investigations and penalties.
- If you post any content deemed to be libel, you may expose yourself to legal actions for any damage to the individual concerned.
- No staff member is to use their social media accounts to contact any student or parent. This would expose you to suggestions of inappropriate relationships or potential grooming situations.
- Post content or participate in any online activity that may bring RAKAA's reputation into disrepute.
- Use any sites that may compromise the security of the RAKAA system in any way.
- Reveal any confidential data or information regarding the school, any of its stakeholders, or anyone associated with the school.
- Staff must not publish any content that could allow for any kind of inferences to be drawn that would embarrass any RAKAA stakeholder or anyone associated with it.
- All staff must remain vigilant for copyright infringements or any other such issues and remember that passing on text, photos, or other content may infringe the owner's copyright. When posting content, always ensure that you have received the original owner's permission.

**At RAKAA, we take all of the above matters very seriously, and any breaches can lead to disciplinary action being taken. Any member of staff who ignores or willfully breaches the terms and advice set out in this policy will be viewed in a very serious light and could ultimately have their employment at RAKAA terminated.**

### **3. Feeling annoyed, aggrieved, or upset about any work-related issues.**

At RAKAA, we understand that all of the members of our community are human beings with real human feelings and emotions. We know that situations often occur in a work setting that may make the participants feel angry, upset, or that they have been unfairly treated.

If you feel like you have been placed in such as situation, it is natural to want to express yourself on your social media platforms. The best advice RAKAA can offer is not to post your feelings online in the heat of the moment as they are likely to be inappropriate, impulsive, and heated and could lead you into trouble.

Try to follow one of the suggestions below instead:

- If you have a serious concern about organizational malpractice or corruption, you can use the RAKAA Whistle Blowing procedure. By following the steps laid out in this policy, you are provided with protection against dismissal and any other matters if you disclose them in the ways set forth by the policy. If you choose to post comments on social media, then you are leaving yourself open to trouble, and you forfeit any legal protection you may have.
- If you feel that a decision made by the school affects you personally, then you can file a grievance.

### **4. How to deal with inappropriate contact, comments, or material.**

If any staff member becomes aware of any inappropriate content, material, or posts, then they must notify the Online Safety Lead or the IT Manager as soon as possible, and where possible, please screenshot or provide printouts of any comments or posts.

If a student or parent tries to follow or like a social media post made by a staff member, then that person must contact the OSL and Designated Safeguarding Lead as soon as possible and do not accept or leave a response for the request.

Similarly, suppose a staff member accidentally makes unintended contact with a student. In that case, the incident must be reported to the OSL and the Designated Safeguarding lead as soon as possible to determine the best way to deal with the situation.

Always make sure that you refer to the RAKAA Online Safety Policy for further details and the RAKAA Safeguarding Policy if the incident would give rise to any potential or actual safeguarding concerns.

## **5. Final Reminder**

This policy is not meant to be an exhaustive list of the use of Social Media at RAKAA. Staff must make sure that they think carefully before they post anything online as nothing is ever really gone from the internet in this day and age.

Prior to posting anything online, RAKAA staff members should remember that RAKAA is a public body, and we are subject to certain expectations, especially since we are owned by H.H. Sheikh Faisal Bin Saqr Al Qassimi.

### **At all times when posting to social media, please remember to:**

- Make sure that you do not publish any information that could allow unauthorized users to access the RAKAA networks or system and any confidential information.
- Ensure that you do not post any confidential information regarding RAKAA on ANY social networking platform.

In using social media – let's do what we ask our students to do and THINK

**T – Is it TRUE?**

**H – Is it HELPFUL?**

**I – Is it INSPIRING?**

**N – Is it NECESSARY?**

**K – Is it KIND?**

### **Before you post, please consider the following:**

- Would you want your employer at RAKKA or any other future employers to see your post?
- How often do you go back and delete content? A post that might have seemed like a great idea a year ago may not send the right message about you now.

This policy has been guided by information found in King Edwards VI School:

<https://www.king-ed.suffolk.sch.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Social-Media-Policy-and-Guidelines-for-Staff.pdf>