



ONLINE COMMUNICATIONS POLICY PUPILS, PARENTS and OLD GIRLS

Our Mission

Farnborough Hill welcomes all into our community, where we aim to live Christ's Gospel values joyfully and wholeheartedly, forming each individual to fulfil her potential and face the future with wisdom, strength and dignity.

Social media offers widespread opportunities to create, share and interact with content, virtual communities and networks. It is important that we use social media effectively but it is also important that we balance this with our duties to our school, the community, our legal responsibilities and our reputation. This policy should be read in conjunction with the following documents and policies:

- School Parental Contract
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Exclusions Policy
- FHOGA Governing Guidelines Policy
- Technology Acceptable Use Policy for Pupils
- Taking Storing and Using of Names and Images of Pupils Policy

For the purposes of this policy, social media platforms include, but are not limited to: blogs and podcasts, online discussion forums, collaborative spaces, media sharing services, online gaming spaces and virtual worlds.

Aims

The aims of this policy are to:

- provide a framework of good practice for the School community to encourage safe and appropriate use of social media
- safeguard children
- protect the School from legal risks
- ensure that the reputation of the School, its staff and governors is protected
- ensure that any users are able clearly to distinguish where information provided via social media is legitimately representative of the School

Legal framework

Users need to be aware that information shared through social media, even privately, is subject to copyright, The Data Protection Act 2018, Freedom of Information legislation, the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 and the Online Safety Act 2025.

Guidelines for Farnborough Hill Friends and other volunteers

- Views expressed/information posted must support the School's ethos and fundamental British values
- Users must keep their personal and professional/school lives separate, avoiding any conflict between the School and their personal interests
- Users must not engage in online activities which might bring Farnborough Hill into disrepute
- Users must never represent their personal views as those of Farnborough Hill on social media
- Users must not discuss personal information relating to pupils, Farnborough Hill or the wider community on social media
- Users must not use social media and the internet in any way to attack, insult, abuse or defame pupils, staff and volunteers at Farnborough Hill or the School itself

Guidelines for Parents and Old Girls – social media

Farnborough Hill expects parents and Old Girls to behave online in a civilised nature and will not tolerate:

- defamatory posts about fellow parents, pupils, Old Girls, the School or staff
- complaining about the School's values, processes, teaching or other matters on social media – the School has a clearly defined Complaints Procedure in place and requests that this is followed

Farnborough Hill retains the right to request any damaging material to be removed from social media. Breaches of this code of conduct will be taken seriously by the School and, in the event of illegal, defamatory, or discriminatory content, could lead to prosecution.

Guidelines for Parents and Old Girls – online messaging

We appreciate the simplicity and ease of instant messaging online. and expect parents to use messaging apps, such as WhatsApp, for purposes beneficial to themselves and the School. We will not accept any of the following behaviour:

- sending abusive messages to fellow parents, members of staff, governors or pupils
- sending abusive messages about members of staff, pupils, governors, parents or the School
- sending abusive messages to or about Old Girls

Should problems arise from the use of messaging apps by parents, the School will act quickly and contact those involved directly. Farnborough Hill can request a meeting with parents or Old Girls if any misconduct occurs online and without the permission of the person involved, view messages sent between members of the parental body or Old Girls to deal with the matter. If necessary, the Headmistress can request that 'group chats' are closed down.

Guidelines for Pupils

Pupils should not use social media or online messaging platforms until they are legally old enough to do so, and must follow the School's Technology Acceptable Use Policy for Pupils. Pupils are expected to be polite and responsible when communicating online and not use inappropriate, strong or aggressive language. They should not use social media to embarrass, distress or bully others or in a way that would bring the School into disrepute. Pupils must not create any social media account or online account, or write any bio for an account, mentioning the School name (or any derivative of the School name) without prior approval of the School. Pupils should not attempt to engage with the personal profiles of current staff on any social media platform. Any incident of a pupil attempting to add a member of staff as a contact will be reported to the Head of Year.

In particular pupils should not:

- download, save, edit or distribute to social media, chat groups or any other online forum any photos, images or videos taken by the School
- take, edit, upload or distribute to social media, chat groups or any other online forum any photos, images or videos taken by themselves or others involved with school-based activities, without express permission of all those involved
- use AI to generate any media (text, images, video or sound) that could be considered offensive, inappropriate or distressing about any other individual, or that could damage the reputation of the school
- take any images or video footage (films) of teachers or lessons, without the express permission of the teacher

Pupils should be aware that behaviour contrary to the School Rules, Code of Conduct, Technology Acceptable Use Policy for Pupils and Behaviour Policy could result in sanctions being given, including, in serious cases, exclusion from the School. In the most serious of cases the School reserves the right to involve the police and safeguarding authorities.

This policy is reviewed annually by the Director of Admissions and Marketing and the Headmistress.

The next review is due in September 2026.