Rationale

Electronic communication includes using mobile phones, computers and other devices for email, text, instant messaging and social networking. As a school we recognise that the world of electronic communication brings with it responsibilities for school staff and implications for safeguarding. We welcome the development of new technologies for communicating and will use them if they are appropriate to enhance our work with young people.

Objectives

- We will take all reasonable measures to ensure that the risks of harm to young people's welfare are minimised; and, where there are concerns about young people's welfare, to take appropriate actions to address those concerns.

- We recognise the need to protect staff and volunteers from inappropriate conduct from young people in their personal lives and from situations that may make them vulnerable to allegations of wrongful conduct.

- We acknowledge that working for Swakeleys School For Girls and 6th Form@Swakeleys requires appropriate conduct in public spaces outside our work and in our personal lives and that this includes electronic communication. We will ensure that our staff and volunteers are aware of the requirements of all relevant legislation in relation to safeguarding and our own school safeguarding policy.

- We will train our staff and volunteers to follow this policy and we will regularly monitor its implementation.

Implementation

E Safety Education

E safety education will be addressed through the PSHCE curriculum. Students will learn about how to keep themselves safe. They will be advised about password protection. They will be made aware of their vulnerabilities online including specifically the use of privacy settings, sexting, child sexual exploitation, radicalisation and contact with strangers. They will also be made aware of the dangers of sending explicit images and personalisation. They will be advised about these issues in terms of personal safety and also the law. E safety lessons will be offered with varying agendas to different year groups in order to address age specific needs. Assemblies will also be used to promote messages about e safety.

Cyber-bullying

Cyber-bullying can consist of threatening e mails, texts or chat messages.

In our technology driven world cyber bullying is becoming increasingly common. Students can be harassed by phone or text, or over the internet.

In cases like these, students should be advised about cyber safety. They should be told to password protect websites, and to keep passwords and phone numbers private. Where

possible the school will work with their parents to encourage them to shut down social networking sites and change phone numbers to protect themselves from this type of bullying. Where cyber-bullying impacts on the safety and wellbeing of students in our care it will be dealt with as seriously as any other type of harassment and where possible the school safer schools officer will be involved. *Please see also The Behaviour Policy, The Anti-Bullying policy.*

Reasons for contacting a young person using electronic communication

It is not appropriate to have private non-work related contact with students using electronic communication.

We recognise that there will be times when it is necessary and important to use electronic communication. In this instance staff should use only their school email account or Google classroom to generate messages. Messages should only relate to the work of the school.

Unnecessary contact could include sharing personal issues or anything that might burden a young person. Excessive contact will also be inappropriate. Young people may email staff about non-work related or personal matters. In this instance a copy of the communication must be taken to the Designated Safeguarding Lead in order that the student be made aware that this is not appropriate and the matter can be addressed. Staff and volunteers should make their line manager or team leader aware when they are using electronic communication with a young person (excepting Google Classroom).

Staff and volunteers should take great care not to use language that might give the wrong impression or create misunderstanding when communicating with a young person, especially when using the informal language and shorthand often used in texts. Staff and volunteers should seek advice from a line manager or team leader whenever there is doubt or concern over the content or context of electronic communication. Staff and volunteers are advised to copy a colleague into electronic communications with students (excepting Google Classroom). Electronic communication on Google Classroom must be appropriate, formal and work focused. Staff must bring any other types of communication to their line manager of the DSL as appropriate.

Parental awareness and consent
We recognise that electronic communication is difficult for parents and carers to monitor. We will explain our policies and practice to parents and carers and seek to ensure they are aware that we use electronic communication as part of our work with young people. We will present to parents on e-safety and encourage them to think about the monitoring of their children's electronic communications.

Mobile phones and texting
Staff and volunteers should not give their personal mobile phone number to young people with whom they are working. School mobile phones are available for use on trips and activities where pupils may need to make contact with staff.

Social networking and instant messaging

Unlike email or texting, social networking and instant messaging involves the possibility of contact with the friends of the young person or of the staff member or volunteer. This raises particular concerns for safeguarding young people.

Staff and volunteers should only use an agreed social networking account to publish information about the school. Swakeleys School For Girls and 6ᵗʰ Form@swakeleys use **Twitter** for this purpose. Staff are advised to use only professional rather than personal Twitter accounts when following the school site or posting information. All staff using professional accounts must be followed by the school account so that all published information is public to the Twitter administrator. Staff wishing to use any other networking site for educational use must clear this with the Leadership Group in order that protocols be established for the use of the site.

Staff and volunteers must not use their personal social networking or instant messaging accounts for contact with young people. If a staff member or volunteer is contacted by a young person on a social networking site, e.g. Facebook, they should not respond by messaging that young person, even to inform them that contact in this way is prohibited. This should instead be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead who will decide on appropriate action. Staff and volunteers should ensure that the content of their social networking accounts, including pictures, are appropriate. Comments and other content must not be derogatory towards those with whom the school works, including young people, school staff and other organisations. Staff and volunteers should ensure that they take responsibility with privacy settings to ensure that personal lives remain private.

Photography

It is appropriate to take photographs of children to capture a curriculum activity or a celebration of school life using school equipment providing we have permission to do so from the parents. Staff must not however use their personal mobile phone, camera (still or moving images) or other devices to take, edit or store images of children from this school.

Child Sexual Exploitation, Peer on Peer Abuse and Radicalisation (Prevent Agenda)

Staff will be made aware that electronic communication is a method of communication that can be private, secretive and can facilitate the agenda of perpetrators who wish to groom young people. Where staff become concerned about instances of electronic communication that could suggest that a young person is at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation, Peer on Peer Abuse or Radicalisation this should be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead. Staff may be alerted to this communication through a disclosure, overhearing a conversation, a discussion in a lesson or other means. Where any risk factors are identified, the school safeguarding procedures must be followed. (See Safeguarding Policy) Staff will be given regularly updated information on these topics and how to identify risks.

Evaluation

The effectiveness of this policy will be evaluated through the Curriculum and Pastoral Committee who will be briefed three times a year on safeguarding and by the Personnel Committee who will be alerted to any complaints or issues relating to school staff.

Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years by the Curriculum and Pastoral Committee. The policy is due for review in October 2024.