



Online Safety and Social Media Policy

Heathfield Swim School / Swim Stars South East Swim School

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1. Introduction

This Online Safety and social media Policy outlines the guidelines for all staff, volunteers, children, and young people involved with Heathfield Swim School and Swim Stars South East. It is intended to protect our participants from online risks and ensure responsible use of digital technology and social media in line with UK legislation and safeguarding best practices.

This policy is designed to:

- Protect children and young people in the online space while engaged with the swim school.
- Guide staff and volunteers in responding to online safety issues.
- Ensure compliance with UK laws, Swim England's Wavepower, and CPSU online safety guidance.

2. Aims

Our primary objectives are:

- To safeguard children and young people who use technology under the supervision of Heathfield Swim School and Swim Stars South East.
- To ensure that staff and volunteers are aware of online safety procedures and can address concerns as they arise.
- To uphold our organisational values, maintaining an online presence that reflects our commitment to safety and the law.

3. Understanding the Online World

Our approach to online safety involves:

- Recognising that the same safety principles apply to all online activity, regardless of the device or platform (e.g., computers, smartphones, social media, gaming consoles).
- Educating staff, volunteers, and children on distinguishing acceptable from unacceptable behaviour online.
- Ensuring all online activities, including the use of social media, comply with UK laws such as the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA), UK GDPR, and safeguarding guidelines.
- Incorporating online safeguarding into broader child protection policies and addressing any online abuse or disclosures as part of our safeguarding procedures.
- Ensuring that the person responsible for managing the organisation's online presence is trained according to CPSU guidelines on online safety.

4. Managing Our Online Presence

To maintain a secure and responsible online presence, we will:

- Ensure all social media accounts are password-protected, with at least two staff members having access to each account.
- Assign a designated person, Elliott Stevens, to oversee and monitor all online activity, ensuring compliance with Swim England, the STA, and safeguarding best practices.
- Remove inappropriate material posted by any party (staff, children, or volunteers) promptly, and ensure that all involved, including parents, are informed.
- Set social media accounts and event pages to private, restricting visibility to invited members, with public pages used solely for marketing.
- Avoid sharing personal information of children, including their addresses, schools, or contact details, on public platforms.
- Seek explicit consent from parents and children (if under 18) before posting any photos or videos on social media.
- Ensure all content aligns with our organisation's goals and values.
- Use appropriate and professional email addresses and social media handles for communication and engagement.

5. Expectations for Staff and Volunteers

All staff and volunteers are expected to:

- Understand and comply with this policy.
- Direct any concerns regarding online conduct or safety to the Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO), Elliott Stevens.

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- Communicate with children or young people only via the designated organisational accounts, and never through personal social media or private messages.
- Avoid “friending” or “following” children or young people on personal social media.
- Ensure all content shared on personal social media is appropriate, given that young people may see their profiles.
- Copy another staff member into any email correspondence with children or young people, ensuring transparency in all communications.
- Refrain from communicating with children outside of working hours (Monday – Friday, 9:30 am – 6:00 pm).
- Treat online disclosures of abuse or harm with the same seriousness and protocol as face-to-face disclosures, reporting them immediately to the DSO.

6. Online Safety for Children and Young People

We recognise that children and young people may be particularly vulnerable in online environments. As such:

- Children and young people will be educated on safe internet use, with clear guidelines on acceptable behaviour online.
- Clear boundaries will be set regarding the use of technology, including mobile phones, during swim sessions.
- Bullying or inappropriate behaviour, whether online or offline, will be addressed under our Anti-Bullying Policy and other relevant safeguarding procedures.
- No child or young person’s personal information will be posted or shared online without prior consent from parents.

7. Photography and Video Usage

The following protocols apply for photography and video recording:

- Explicit consent must be obtained from parents or caregivers, and children (if aged 10 and above), before any photos or videos are taken during swim lessons.
- Photos or videos taken for advertising, stroke analysis, or celebration purposes will be handled with care, ensuring they are used only for the stated purpose.
- Photos or videos intended for social media will require separate consent, which must be provided in writing.
- Children and parents have the right to withdraw consent at any time, and any media involving their child will be immediately removed from platforms if requested.

8. Incident Reporting

If an incident of online abuse or inappropriate behaviour occurs:

- Staff and volunteers must report the incident to the Designated Safeguarding Officer immediately.
- A record will be kept of the incident, detailing actions taken and any communication with external agencies.
- If the incident involves illegal activity or abuse, appropriate authorities will be contacted, including law enforcement or child protection services.

9. Staff Training

All staff and volunteers will:

- Receive online safety and safeguarding training during their induction and refresher courses at regular intervals.
- Be aware of emerging online risks and how to respond to them.
- Stay updated on the latest legal and best practice guidelines, particularly in relation to children's use of technology and social media.

10. Review and Compliance

This policy will be reviewed annually and updated as necessary to reflect changes in technology, legislation, and best practices. Staff will be notified of any significant updates or changes to the policy.

11. Consequences of Non-Compliance

Failure to comply with this policy by any staff, contractors or volunteer will result in disciplinary action, including possible termination of employment or volunteer roles, in accordance with safeguarding protocols.

