Oxford Rugby Club Limited

Social Media Policy

Oxford Rugby Football Club (ORFC)

Official Social Media & Online Communication Policy (2026–2028 Seasons)

1. Purpose & Scope

This policy sets out the mandatory standards for social media use and online communication across all sections of Oxford Rugby Football Club (ORFC), including Senior, Academy, Women & Girls, and Mini & Youth sections.

It applies to all **members, players, coaches, volunteers, match officials, committee members, and parents/carers**. The objective is to promote rugby, drive community engagement, protect the reputation of ORFC, and ensure strict compliance with **Rugby Football Union (RFU) Regulation & Safeguarding Guidance** and statutory UK legislation.

2. Legal & Regulatory Framework

This policy integrates statutory requirements and governing body guidance, including:

- **RFU Core Values & Regulations:** Teamwork, Respect, Enjoyment, Discipline, and Sportsmanship.
- **UK Online Safety Act:** Compliance with legal duties regarding illegal content, hate speech, and protection of minors online.
- **UK Data Protection Act & UK GDPR:** Protection of personal data and image rights.
- **Communications Act & Malicious Communications Act:** Protection against harassment, cyberbullying, and grossly offensive content online.

3. Core Principles & General Guidelines

When interacting on public forums, messaging platforms, or official club channels, members must adhere to the following standards:

3.1 Respect & Professionalism

- **Public Nature of Social Media:** Treat every online platform as a public arena.

- **RFU Core Values:** Posts must reflect the core values of rugby at all times.
- **Match Officials:** Public criticism or insinuation of bias regarding referees, touch judges, or match officials is strictly prohibited.
- **Banter vs. Abuse:** Content perceived by the sender as "banter" can be classified as harassment or defamation. Discriminatory language based on age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage/civil partnership, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion/belief, sex, or sexual orientation will result in immediate disciplinary action.

3.2 Individual Accountability

- Members are personally and legally responsible for content published under their personal accounts.
- Re-posting, retweeting, or sharing inappropriate content constitutes endorsement and is actionable under RFU regulations.
- Deleting or publicly apologizing for an improper post does not prevent RFU or Club disciplinary proceedings.

4. Official Club Platforms & Administration

1. **Authorized Management:** Official ORFC accounts (Facebook, Instagram, X/Twitter, TikTok, YouTube, LinkedIn) may only be created and managed by designated Club Communications Officers approved by the Executive Committee.
2. **Branding & Intellectual Property:** The ORFC crest, name, and logos are intellectual property and cannot be used on personal, unofficial, or commercial accounts without written Committee permission.
3. **Vicarious Liability & Take-Down Protocol:** ORFC can be held vicariously liable for third-party comments on its official pages. Appointed administrators reserve the right to moderate, hide, or delete non-compliant posts immediately.

5. Safeguarding Children & Vulnerable Adults (Age Grade Rugby)

Strict standards apply to all communication involving Age Grade players (under 18):

5.1 Direct Messaging & Social Media Relationships

- **No Direct Messaging:** Coaches, volunteers, and club officials must **never** engage in one-to-one direct messaging (via SMS, WhatsApp, social media platforms, or email) with Age Grade players.
- **Friend Requests:** Adults in a position of trust (coaches, managers, referees) must not accept or initiate "friend" or "follow" requests with U18 members.
- **Parental Copying:** Electronic communication regarding fixtures, training, or selection must be directed to parents/carers or copy in a parent/carer.

5.2 Messaging Groups (e.g., WhatsApp, Teamer, Swoodle)

- Team/group messaging apps must be set to **Admin-Only Posting** where feasible for announcements.
- Groups must include at least two DBS-checked adults (including a designated manager or the Club Safeguarding Officer).
- Age Grade messaging groups must consist of **parents/carers**, not minors.

5.3 Photographs & Video Content

- **Parental Consent:** Images or videos of Age Grade players may only be published if valid written consent has been obtained via annual registration.
- **Naming Restrictions:** Do not publish full names alongside photographs of individual children. Never identify a child by full name, tagged profile, or location tag in public media captions.
- **Appropriate Imagery:** Images must focus on the game/activity and depict players in full rugby kit. Photos in changing rooms, treatment areas, or non-rugby settings are strictly prohibited.
- **Live Streaming:** Live streaming of Age Grade matches requires prior written approval from the Club Safeguarding Officer and compliance with RFU streaming guidance.

6. Summary: Do's and Don'ts

Do	Don't
Do promote team achievements, events, and inclusive rugby values.	**Don't** criticize, insult, or imply bias against match officials, opponents, or spectators.
Do check parental consent before posting pictures of Age Grade players.	**Don't** publish individual child images alongside their full names or personal details.
Do maintain professional boundaries between adult members and U18 players.	**Don't** direct message, text, or "friend" children on personal social accounts.
Do report harmful, abusive, or non-compliant content to the Executive Committee.	**Don't** engage in online arguments, disputes, or retaliatory comments on public forums.

7. Reporting & Disciplinary Sanctions

7.1 Reporting Procedure

- Non-safeguarding policy breaches should be reported in writing to the **Club Chairman** at chairman@oxfordrfc.com.
- Safeguarding, cyberbullying, or child safety concerns must be reported immediately to the **Club Safeguarding Officer (CSO)** at *Federica Romei* romei.federica@gmail.com

7.2 Sanctions

Any breach of this policy brings Oxford Rugby Football Club into disrepute and will be investigated under the **ORFC Disciplinary Procedures**. Penalties may include:

1. Formal written warning and requirement to remove offending content.
2. Removal from official club platforms and social channels.
3. Suspension from training, playing, or coaching duties.
4. Formal expulsion from Oxford RFC.
5. Referral to the **RFU Discipline/Safeguarding Department** or **Thames Valley Police** in cases involving potential criminal offenses.

Adopted by the Executive Committee of Oxford RFC

Effective Period: August 2026 – July 2028

Review Date: June 2028