



SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Reviewed September 2016

Related Documents:

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Acceptable Use Policy, Online Safety Policy, Bullying and Cyberbullying Policy, Complaints Policy, Staff Code of Conduct

Introduction to the Policy

Our school has always embraced and developed the use of new technologies into the curriculum. The school acknowledges that recent developments in mobile and internet based technology has seen an ever increasing number of adults and children making use of social media sites. The most common of these being Facebook and Twitter.

Social networking sites bring schools and their wider communities a whole host of opportunities to understand, engage and communicate with the wider world in new and exciting ways.

The nature of social networking and the mobile technology on which it is deployed allow all users to access it in a flexible and effective way.

As a school we have to plan and ensure that we balance the use of social networking and the associated risks and take necessary steps to protect the image and reputation of the staff, school community and organisation.

Key Principles

Staff and Governors at Sacred Heart have a responsibility to ensure that they protect the reputation of the school, and to treat all members of the school family with respect. It is important to protect everyone at Sacred Heart from allegations and misinterpretations which can arise from the use of social networking sites.

Safeguarding children is fundamental to everything we do at school and it is essential that everyone at Sacred Heart considers this and acts responsibly if they are using social networking sites out of school.

Anyone working in the school either as a paid employee or volunteer must not communicate with children via social networking. This policy relates to social networking inside and outside of work.

Blogging and accessing social networking sites at work using school equipment is not permitted unless on behalf of the school and with the permission of the Head Teacher and Governing Body.

Purpose of this document

The aim of this policy is to support and develop all members of the school community to understand the risks involved and develop a structure of good practice that supports innovation and provides a framework of good support, whilst protecting the school's reputation and that of the staff and community.

The purpose of this document is to ensure that:

- The school and the staff are not exposed to legal risks
- The reputation of the school, staff members and governors are not adversely affected.
- That all members of the school community understand how the school uses social media technology to support communication and learning in school.
- That all members of the school community understand what is classed as acceptable behaviour when using social media technology within a professional context.
- That all members of the school community are clearly able to distinguish where information provided via a social networking application is legitimately representative of the organisation.

What is social networking technology?

Social networking covers a range of internet based technologies that have been developed in the past decade to enhance and improve the way we communicate and interact with others. The examples listed below are some of the most common examples in use today:

- Online discussion forums, such as netmums.com.
- Collaborative spaces, such as Facebook.
- Media sharing services, such as YouTube.
- 'Micro-blogging' applications, such as Twitter.
- Professional Communities, such as LinkedIn
- Chat Room / Voice over Internet Services, such as Skype

We acknowledge that this is not an exhaustive list and that new websites are set up daily. This policy includes all social media sites both online now and in the future.

The role of School Leaders, Governors and Staff

Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School, the staff and the Governing Body have the right to protect and uphold the reputation of the school and staff members. To protect employees' own professional reputation and that of the school, Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School and the governing body reminds all members of staff that all communication via social networking sites must be made with the awareness that anything said, shown or received could be made available, intentionally or otherwise, to an audience wider than that originally intended. It is therefore advised that staff follow the following procedures:

- Staff must not access social networking sites for personal use via school information systems or using school equipment.
- Staff must not accept pupils as friends – personal communication could be considered inappropriate and unprofessional and makes staff vulnerable to allegations.
- Staff must not accept current pupils' parents as friends (unless they are friends previous to the child starting school) – personal communication could be considered inappropriate and unprofessional and makes staff vulnerable to allegations.
- Staff are advised not to be friends with recent pupils. The potential for staff to be compromised in terms of wall content and open to accusations makes the risk not worth taking.
- Staff must not provide parents or students with personal contact details, email or mobile numbers.
- Staff must not use personal devices to record images of children or colleagues, any images taken on school owned devices must not be taken off site without the prior consent of the Head Teacher.
- Staff must check any YouTube video's suitability and content before use in class.
- Staff must not disclose any information that is confidential to the school or disclose personal data or information about any individual/colleague/pupil, which could be in breach of the Data Protection Act.
- Staff must not disclose any information about the school that is not yet in the public arena.
- Members of staff should not post anonymously or under an alias to evade the guidance given in this policy.
- When writing emails and other communications care must be taken to avoid using language which could be deemed as offensive to others, emails sent from the school domain must be written in a professional manner. Outside of school we recognise that all members of the school community have the right to a private life, but we ask that all employees follow these guidelines to help protect the professional reputation of themselves and the school.
- Staff must take reasonable action to secure private sites, profiles and accounts. If required, IT Support are able to demonstrate to any staff member how to change the settings to ensure that their account cannot be viewed by uninvited users. Passwords must not be shared with any students.
- Staff are advised not to place inappropriate photographs publicly on their social networking account.
- Staff are advised not post indecent remarks, or remarks that could be deemed as defamatory or offensive. Staff are personally responsible for the content they publish on blogs, wikis or any other form of user-generated media. Be mindful that what you publish will be public for a long time—protect your privacy.

- If a member of staff receives messages on his/her social networking profile that they think could be from a pupil they must report it to their Line Manager / Head Teacher and contact their internet service or social networking provider so that they can investigate and take the appropriate action;
- Staff are advised not to write about their work.
- Staff must not make defamatory remarks about the school/colleagues/pupils or post anything that could potentially bring the school into disrepute.
- Staff must not disclose confidential information relating to his/her employment at the school.
- Members of staff should not leave a computer or other device logged in when away from their desk, or save passwords.

The Role of Parents and Carers

We ask that all parents and carers follow these rules to ensure that our school environment and community is protected and safe.

- Mobile Phones must be switched off at the main entrance and not used whilst inside the building.
- Whilst collecting and dropping off children we ask that parent's do not use their mobile devices, and under no circumstances take pictures within the school building and playground areas.
- Not to post images (photos and videos) of pupils other than their own children on social media sites unless they have the permission of the parents of other children in the pictures. If images are found or reported to the school, we will contact the account holder or the service provider and ask for them to remove them.
- We ask that parents and carers follow our grievance procedures and contact the school office or Head Teacher directly if they have a concern or complaint about a member of staff or an incident that occurred during the school day. Please do not post details of a complaint or grievance publicly on a social media site. Such action could be prejudicial in respect of the formal grievance/complaints procedure.
- Not to post malicious or fictitious comments on social media sites about any member of the school community. Please remember that school and governing body have a legal right to protect the reputation of the school and will use all necessary means to remove any defamatory comments, sites or posts from the internet.
- We ask that parents do not post confidential material including letters, details from meetings, reviews and parent teacher conferences online. Outside of school we ask that parents and carers support the work of the school by ensuring that their children's internet access is supervised and safe.
- We ask that parents do not use the school name, logo or images of any children/staff/parents on any social media platform without the express consent of the Headteacher.
- Parents and carers have a duty of care and must ensure that websites are filtered using appropriate software. Please contact the school if you require any advice on suitable monitoring software. Please ensure that your children are using age appropriate sites, software and games: Youtube, Google+, Flickr, Facebook legally requires that all users are 13 or older before they can create a profile.
- We ask that all members of our community are respectful to the Catholic ethos of our school and do not post comments or opinions that are deemed disrespectful or inappropriate to our Catholic faith.

The Role of Children

We ask that all our children follow these rules to ensure that our school environment is protected and safe.

- Mobile Phones must be switched off at the main entrance and not used whilst inside the building. Children must hand in their phone to the school office who will secure it in a locked cupboard. Please note the school accepts no liability for damage or loss to mobile devices bought onto school premises.

- Please remember that school and governing body have a legal right to protect the reputation of the school and will use all necessary means to remove any defamatory comments, sites or posts from the internet.
- We ask that children do not post confidential material including details from meetings, reviews and parent teacher conferences online.
- We ask that children will support the schools approach to online safety and not deliberately upload or add any images, video, sounds or text that could upset any member of the school community
- The school makes all children aware that their use of ICT resource both inside and outside of school can be checked and that their parent/ carer can be contacted if a member of school staff is concerned about my online safety or my use of IT resources. (See Acceptable Use Policy for Further details)

Cyber bullying

This is an ever increasing problem in our society and all parties need to take responsibility for monitoring our children's use of the internet, email and text message facilities.

If Cyber Bullying occurs within school premises or whilst using school equipment it is the responsibility of the Headteacher/Class Teacher to investigate and resolve the issue. (See Online Safety and Acceptable Use Policy).

If children are found to be in breach of our school rules then the school will discipline them following the guidelines set out in the behaviour policy.

If incidents are occurring outside of school either at home or within the community it is the responsibility of the Parents /Carers to contact either the school, or local CPSO who will be able to offer support and guidance.

Where incidents occur outside of school it is at the Head Teachers discretion to discipline pupils. We ask that in the first instance pupils report the incident to their class teacher or parents.

It is important that children do not cause a situation to escalate by posting defamatory comments, emails or challenging other parents or children within the school grounds.

Complaints and investigations

In the first instance a complaint raised by a member of the school community will be investigated by the Head Teacher / SLT following the online safety policy

If criminal activity is suspected the matter will be referred to the Police for investigation.

Breaches of Policy

All breaches of this policy will be fully investigated. Where it is found that there has been a breach of the policy this may result in action being taken. A breach of this policy for staff will be considered to be a serious disciplinary offence which is also contrary to the school's ethos and principles. A breach or suspected breach of policy by a contractor or pupil may result in the temporary or permanent withdrawal of school ICT hardware, software or services from the offending individual.

Any breach of this policy by parents/carers will lead to the parent being contacted and a meeting with the Headteacher and Chair of Governors requested. If inappropriate comments have been made online a request will be made for the post to be removed immediately.

Policy breaches may also lead to criminal or civil proceedings against an individual or group.

The Governing Body will take appropriate action in order to protect the school's reputation and that of its staff, parents, governors, children and anyone else directly linked to the school.

Safeguarding

If any member of staff becomes aware of any materials on social media sites which compromise the safeguarding of pupils or staff members they should inform their line manager immediately and follow guidelines set out in the school's Child Protection Policy.

The Education Act 2002 places a duty on schools to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school by ensuring that risks of harm to welfare are minimised and taking appropriate actions to address concerns about the welfare of a child or children, working to agreed local policies and procedures in full partnership with other agencies.

The Social Media Policy should be read in conjunction with the Child Protection Policy– where concerns arise regarding safeguarding and/or child protection, these should be recorded in writing, signed and dated, and passed on to one of the designated Named Persons in school.

The Law

When posting material onto social-media sites parents, pupils and staff should be conscious at all times of the need to keep their school/professional life and personal life separate. There is a catch-all offence under Section 127 of the Communications Act 2003. This makes it illegal to send “by means of a public electronic communications network a message that is grossly offensive or of an indecent, obscene or menacing character”.

There is a variety of legislation under which both our Online Safety and Social Media Policy has been produced. It is important to note that in general terms an action that is illegal if committed offline is also illegal if committed online.

Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School will consider legal advice in the advent of a social media/online safety issue or situation:

- Computer Misuse Act 1990
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Malicious Communications Act 1988
- Communications Act 2003
- Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000
- Trade Marks Act 1994
- Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988
- Telecommunications Act 1984
- Criminal Justice & Public Order Act 1994
- Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Protection of Children Act 1978
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Public Order Act 1986 (This Act makes it a criminal offence to stir up racial hatred by displaying, publishing or distributing written)
- Obscene Publications Act 1959 and 1964
- Human Rights Act 1998
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education and Inspections Act 2011
- The School Information Regulations 2012

Libel and Privacy

Comments made online by parents could possibly be classed as Libel in some cases. Libel is defined as 'defamation by written or printed words, pictures, or in any form other than by spoken words or gestures'. The authors of such comments can be held accountable under Defamation law, which was created to protect individuals or organisations from unwarranted, mistaken or untruthful attacks on their reputation.

Defamation is a civil “common law” tort in respect of which the Defamation Acts of 1952 and 1996 provide certain defences. It applies to any published material that damages the reputation of an individual or an organisation, and it includes material published on the internet. A civil action for defamation can be brought by an individual or a company, but not by a public authority. Libel is a civil and not criminal issue and specific legal advice may be required.

Where defamatory material is posted on a website, the person affected can inform the host of its contents and ask the host to remove it. Once the host knows that the material is there and that it may be defamatory, it can no longer rely on the defence of innocent dissemination in the Defamation Act 1996. This means that the person affected could (if the material has been published in the jurisdiction, i.e. in England and Wales) obtain a court order (an injunction) to require removal of the material, and could sue either the host or the person who posted the material for defamation.

Other issues

If social media is used to publish private and confidential information (for example breaches of data protection act) about an individual, it could give rise to a potential privacy claim and it is possible to seek an injunction and damages.

Appendix A – Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School’s Official Social Media Page Guidelines (Facebook and Twitter)

Overview

Social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter have changed the way people communicate and interact with each other. 400 million users worldwide use Facebook and Twitter which has an age restriction of 13 years old. These new and emerging technologies are giving educational settings the opportunity to establish and maintain connections between schools and their client groups.

‘Social media’ is the term commonly given to websites and online tools which allow users to interact with each other in some way – by sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interests. As the name implies, social media involves the building of communities or networks, encouraging participation and engagement.

Objectives

1. To display the school details
2. To enhance and maintain communication with parents and carers.
3. To promote events and community cohesion.
4. Flash announcements i.e. swimming today don’t forget your kit! School is closed today!
5. Reminders of social events in school (school disco, summer fair)

Strategies

1. The School Office will be the administrator of the sites and be responsible for setting up and updating the pages. Other key members of staff will also be able to update them, with agreed information.
2. The pages will be set up as a business so that the individual updating it cannot be identified.
3. The pages will be monitored daily initially and updated at least weekly by the administrator.
4. Under no circumstances will pictures or videos of children be used on the pages, unless permission has been sought from the parents.
5. Under no circumstances will a child’s name and photograph be posted together
6. Under no circumstances will a child’s full name be posted online
7. All children known to be under the age of 13 will be blocked from the site.
8. An assembly will be delivered to the school children discussing social networking safety and the Facebook/Twitter pages.
9. Any language that is deemed inappropriate will be removed, and the perpetrator will be reported to Facebook/Twitter and blocked from the pages.
10. Information will be sent out to parents/carers promoting the sites and outlining the administrator rules.
11. Links to both pages appear on the school newsletter, and will appear on the school website.
12. Ability to posts on the Facebook wall is removed, as is the ability to send messages.
13. The Page will use the Facebook profanity filter to block any unsuitable words the school will also actively update the profanity filter on a regular basis.

The pages will be a positive tool that promote community cohesion and strengthen communication between Sacred Heart and its stakeholders. The success of the Sacred Heart Facebook/Twitter pages will be reviewed annually.