

WHITEFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL

Internet Social Networking Policy



Reviewed: January 2012

Review date: January 2015

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We acknowledge that social networking has become part of everyday life with many people of all ages using social networking sites such as Facebook, MySpace, Bebo and Twitter on a daily basis.

Many feel that there are valid reasons for exploring the educational benefits of these sites because research shows that the most discussed topics on these sites by young people are those dealing with homework and lessons.

However, school based staff need to be aware that 'posting' anything on these social networking sites about themselves, others or their place of work must be prepared for the possibility that anyone could gain access to it. This has been a major factor in identity theft.

It is important that we are able to use these technologies and services effectively and flexibly. However, it is also important to ensure that we balance this with our duties to our School Community and partners, our legal responsibilities and our reputation.

For example, our use of social networking applications has implications for our **duty to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults**. The policy requirements in this document aim to provide this balance to support innovation and Schools of the 21st Century, whilst providing a framework of good practice.

In terms of teacher's and Governor's use of social networking and the web, they must be careful what information is posted due to potential security risks.

The following recommendations should be considered if using social networking websites:

- Only use them if absolutely necessary.
- Use only your name for the profile.
- Do not put your date of birth on the profile.
- Be wary of what photographs you put online of yourself, family or friends.
- Remember you must have their permission to publish.
- Make your profiles 'invite' only and thus only allow people you trust with certainty to view your information.
- Do not post your occupation.
- Do not discuss your work.
- Do not publish photographs taken at your work.
- Do not discuss your political or religious views.
- Be careful what viewpoints you express.

- If you do post anything online be mindful of the fact you could lose total control of it.
- Be careful of what other people post on your profile. You might be careful but are your friends?

School based staff should use these social networking sites wisely and cautiously bearing in mind they should not jeopardise themselves, others or their place of work.

Aims

The purpose of this policy is to ensure:

- Whitefield Primary School, its leaders and governors are not exposed to legal risks
- the reputation of Whitefield Primary School, staff and governors at the school are not adversely affected
- all children are safeguarded
- any users are able to clearly distinguish where information provided via social networking applications is legitimately representative of Whitefield Primary School
- all school personnel are aware of the dangers of using internet social networking sites.
- all school personnel are aware of the consequences of using internet social networking sites inappropriately.
- to work with other schools to share good practice in order to improve this policy.

Procedure

- This policy covers the use of social networking applications by School Employees, Governors and/or Elected Members and by partners or other third parties on behalf of the School.
- These groups are referred to collectively as 'School Representatives' for the purpose of this policy.
- The requirements of this policy apply to all uses of social networking applications which are used for any school or local authority related purpose and regardless of whether the applications are hosted corporately or not. They must also be considered where School Representatives are contributing in an official capacity to social networking applications provided by external organisations.
- Social networking applications include, but are not limited to: Blogs, Online discussion forums, Collaborative spaces, Media sharing services, 'Microblogging' applications. Examples include Twitter, Facebook, MSN, and You Tube.

- Many of the principles of this policy also apply to other types of online presence such as virtual worlds.
- All School Representatives should bear in mind that information they share through social networking applications, **even if they are on private spaces**, are still subject to copyright, data protection and Freedom of Information legislation, the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 and other legislation. They must also operate in line with the School and Local Authority Equality and Safeguarding Policies.
- School staff will not invite, accept or engage in communications with parents or children from the school community to any personal social networking sites while in employment at Whitefield Primary School.
- Any communication received from children to School Representatives must be immediately reported to the Head Teacher – Designated Child Protection Officer and procedures for safeguarding followed.
- If a School Representative is made aware of any other inappropriate communications involving any child and social networking. These must be reported immediately as above.
- School internet policy must be used at all times when children use ICT and access the internet in school.

Role of the Governing Body

The Governing Body has:

- delegated powers and responsibilities to the Headteacher to ensure all school personnel and stakeholders are aware of and comply with this policy;
- responsibility for ensuring funding is in place to support this policy;
- responsibility for ensuring policies are made available to parents;
- responsibility for the effective implementation, monitoring and evaluation of this policy

Role of the Head teacher

The Head teacher will:

- ensure all school personnel, pupils and parents are aware of and comply with this policy;
- work closely with the nominated governor;
- monitor the effectiveness of this policy;
- annually report to the Governing Body on the success and development of this policy

Role of School Personnel

School personnel and Governors will:

- comply with all aspects of this policy
- not access social networking sites during the school day;
- not post confidential school information or information about any member of the school personnel on any social networking site;
- not make reference to the school or anyone connected to it when using any social networking site;
- not bring the school into disrepute by making any derogatory, defamatory, discriminatory or offensive comments on any social networking site;
- not make discriminatory or offensive comments about any member of the school personnel on any social networking site;
- be aware that the Governing Body will take the necessary disciplinary action if any member of the school personnel breaches this policy

Any communications or content you publish that causes damage to the School, Local Authority, any of its employees or any third party's reputation may amount to misconduct or gross misconduct to which the School and Local Dismissal and Disciplinary Policies apply.

Where applications allow the posting of messages online, users must be mindful that the right to freedom of expression attaches only to lawful conduct.

Role of Parents/Carers

Parents/carers will:

- be aware of and comply with this policy;
- be asked to take part periodic surveys conducted by the school

Raising Awareness of this Policy

We will raise awareness of this policy via:

- the School Prospectus
- the school website
- the Staff Handbook
- meetings with parents such as introductory, transition, parent-teacher consultations and other school events
- meetings with school personnel
- communications with home such as weekly newsletters and of end of half term newsletters
- Headteacher reports to the Governing Body
- information displays as appropriate

Monitoring the Effectiveness of the Policy

Annually (or when the need arises) the effectiveness of this policy will be reviewed by the Head teacher and the nominated governor and the

necessary recommendations for improvement will be made to the
Governors.

Head teacher

January 2012

Chair of Governors

(This Policy will next be reviewed in January 2015)