

WHITEFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL

Social Networking Policy



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SOCIAL NETWORKING POLICY

INTRODUCTION

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.

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 principles set out in this policy are designed to ensure that staff members use social media responsibly so that confidentiality of pupils and other staff and the reputation of the school and Liverpool City Council are safeguarded.

Staff members must be conscious at all times of the need to keep their personal and professional lives separate.

SCOPE

This policy applies to Whitefield Primary School governing body, all teaching and other staff, whether employed by the City Council or employed directly by the school, external contractors providing services on behalf of the school or the City Council, teacher trainees and other trainees, volunteers and other individuals who work for or provide services on behalf of the school. These individuals are collectively referred to as 'staff members' in this policy. Failure to follow this policy could lead to disciplinary procedures and policies of the city council/school being actioned.

This policy covers personal use of social media as well as the use of social media for official school purposes, including sites hosted and maintained on behalf of the school

This policy applies to personal webspace such as social networking sites (for example *Facebook*, *MySpace*), blogs, mircoblogs such as *Twitter*, chatrooms, forums, podcasts, open access online encyclopaedias such as *Wikipedia*, social bookmarking sites such as *del.icio.us* and content sharing sites such as *flickr* and *YouTube*. The internet is a fast moving technology and it is impossible to cover all circumstances or emerging media - the principles set out in this policy must be followed irrespective of the medium.

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.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Whitefield Primary School is committed to ensuring that all staff members provide confidential services that meet the highest standards. All individuals working on behalf of the school are bound by a legal duty of confidence and other laws to protect the confidential information they have access to during the course of their work. Disclosure of confidential information on social media is likely to be a breach of a number of laws and professional codes of conduct, including:

- the Human Rights Act 1998
- Common law duty of confidentiality, and
- the Data Protection Act 1998.

Confidential information includes, but is not limited to:

- Person-identifiable information, e.g. pupil and employee records protected by the Data Protection Act 1998
- Information divulged in the expectation of confidentiality
- School or City Council business or corporate records containing organisationally or publicly sensitive information
- Any commercially sensitive information such as information relating to commercial proposals or current negotiations, and
- Politically sensitive information.

Staff members should also be aware that other laws relating to libel, defamation, harassment and copyright may apply to information posted on social media, including:

- Libel Act 1843
- Defamation Acts 1952 and 1996

- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994
- Malicious Communications Act 1998
- Communications Act 2003, and
- Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

Whitefield Primary School and the City Council could be held vicariously responsible for acts of their employees in the course of their employment. For example, staff members who harass co-workers online or who engage in cyberbullying or discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, disability, etc or who defame a third party while at work may render Whitefield Primary School or the City Council liable to the injured party.

RELATED POLICIES

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following school and City Council policies:

- Liverpool City Council Code of Conduct for Employees
- Whitefield Primary E safety policy
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PRINCIPLES – BE PROFESSIONAL, RESPONSIBLE AND RESPECTFUL

- You must be conscious at all times of the need to keep your personal and professional lives separate. You should not put yourself in a position where there is a conflict between your work for the school or City Council and your personal interests.
- You must not engage in activities involving social media which might bring Whitefield Primary School or the City Council into disrepute.
- You must not represent your personal views as those of Whitefield Primary School or the City Council on any social medium.
- You must not discuss personal information about pupils, Whitefield Primary School or City Council staff and other professionals you interact with as part of your job on social media.
- You must not use social media and the internet in any way to attack, insult, abuse or defame pupils, their family members, colleagues, other professionals, other organisations, Whitefield Primary School or the City Council.
- You must be accurate, fair and transparent when creating or altering online sources of information on behalf of Whitefield Primary School or the City Council.

PERSONAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

- Staff members must not identify themselves as employees of Whitefield Primary School or City Council or service providers for the school or City Council in their personal webspace. This is to prevent information on these sites from being linked with the school

and the City Council and to safeguard the privacy of staff members, particularly those involved in providing sensitive frontline services.

- Staff members must not have contact through any personal social medium with any pupil, whether from Whitefield Primary School or any other school, unless the pupils are family members.
- Whitefield Primary School does not expect staff members to discontinue contact with their family members via personal social media once the school starts providing services for them. However, any information staff members obtain in the course of their employment must not be used for personal gain nor be passed on to others who may use it in such a way.
- Staff members must not have any contact with pupils' family members through personal social media if that contact is likely to constitute a conflict of interest or call into question their objectivity.
- If staff members wish to communicate with pupils through social media sites or to enable pupils to keep in touch with one another, they can only do so with the approval of the school and through official school sites created according to the requirements specified in section 7 and Appendix A.
- Staff members must decline 'friend requests' from pupils they receive in their personal social media accounts. Instead, if they receive such requests from pupils who are not family members, they must discuss these in general terms in class and signpost pupils to become 'friends' of the official school site.
- On leaving Whitefield Primary's service, staff members must not contact Whitefield Primary's pupils by means of personal social media sites. Similarly, staff members must not contact pupils from their former schools by means of personal social media.
- Information staff members have access to as part of their employment, including personal information about pupils and their family members, colleagues, City Council staff and other parties and school or City Council corporate information must not be discussed on their personal webpage.
- Photographs, videos or any other types of image of pupils and their families or images depicting staff members wearing school or City Council uniforms or clothing with school or City Council logos or images identifying sensitive school or City Council premises (eg care homes, secure units) must not be published on personal webpage.

- School or City Council email addresses and other official contact details must not be used for setting up personal social media accounts or to communicate through such media.
- Staff members must not edit open access online encyclopaedias such as Wikipedia in a personal capacity at work. This is because the source of the correction will be recorded as the employer's IP address and the intervention will, therefore, appear as if it comes from the employer itself.
- Whitefield Primary School or City Council corporate, service or team logos or brands must not be used or published on personal webspace.
- Personal phones and devices should only be used in the designated area, the staffroom.
- Caution is advised when inviting work colleagues to be 'friends' in personal social networking sites. Social networking sites blur the line between work and personal lives and it may be difficult to maintain professional relationships or it might be just too embarrassing if too much personal information is known in the work place.
- Staff members are strongly advised to ensure that they set the privacy levels of their personal sites as strictly as they can and to opt out of public listings on social networking sites to protect their own privacy. Staff members should keep their passwords confidential, change them often and be careful about what is posted online; it is not safe to reveal home addresses, telephone numbers and other personal information. It is a good idea to use a separate email address just for social networking so that any other contact details are not given away.

USING SOCIAL MEDIA ON BEHALF OF Whitefield Primary School

Staff members can only use official school sites for communicating with pupils or to enable pupils to communicate with one another.

There must be a strong pedagogical or business reason for creating official school sites to communicate with pupils or others. Staff must not create sites for trivial reasons which could expose the school to unwelcome publicity or cause reputational damage.

Official school sites must be created only according to the requirements specified in Appendix A of this Policy. Sites created must not breach the terms and conditions of social media service providers, particularly with regard to minimum age requirements.

Staff members must at all times act in the best interests of children and young people when creating, participating in or contributing content to social media sites.

MONITORING OF INTERNET USE

Whitefield Primary School monitors usage of its internet and email services without prior notification or authorisation from users.

Users of Whitefield Primary School email and internet services should have no expectation of +privacy in anything they create, store, send or receive using the school's ICT system.

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.

BREACHES OF THE POLICY

Any breach of this policy may lead to disciplinary action being taken against the staff member/s involved in line with Whitefield Primary School or City Council Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

A breach of this policy leading to breaches of confidentiality, or defamation or damage to the reputation of Whitefield Primary School or the City Council or any illegal acts or acts that render Whitefield Primary School or the City Council liable to third parties may result in disciplinary action or dismissal.

Contracted providers of Whitefield Primary School or City Council services must inform the relevant school or City Council officer immediately of any breaches of this policy so that appropriate action can be taken to protect confidential information and limit the damage to the reputation of the school and the City Council. Any action against breaches should be according to contractors' internal disciplinary procedures.