

Acceptable Use Policy – Social Networking

Whilst exciting and beneficial both in and out of the context of education, much ICT, in particular web-based resources, are not consistently policed. All users need to be aware of the range of risks associated with the use of these Internet technologies.

Social networking is where users create an account on a web service that facilitates communication, collaboration and sharing. Facebook is the most well known. It has specific purposes: status updates; wall feeds and photo sharing etc. The networking concept comes from being able to connect to and follow other users. YouTube is another example. You can host videos on YouTube by creating an account but people without an account can view these videos unless you stipulate otherwise. Users can connect and follow each other.

This policy has arisen due to the increasing need to ensure our staff and pupils remain safe whilst online. ‘Teaching a way of living’ implies that we are **preparing our pupils and students for the world they live in**. Universities, Colleges and Schools all over the world are employing social media to engage their communities with the organisation. However there are certain groups and settings that may infringe on the professional boundaries of school staff. School staff have a duty of care for the wellbeing of pupils and they must do this by acting responsibly and modelling appropriate behaviour at all times. It is important that this behaviour is modelled inside the online community, especially when becoming a member of a group as they could reveal a school staff to pupils, parents and external members of the local community.

When is it appropriate to use social networking?

- To communicate
- To share
- To provide access to resources
- To discuss and collaborate
- To publish

As Social Networking continues to advance, so does the necessity for individuals to use it as a tool to try and damage the reputation of educational professionals. Educational professionals have always had to uphold a professional image of themselves, not just to pupils they teach but also to the local community that they work in.

The school recognises that many staff will actively use Facebook, Twitter and other such social networking sites, blogging and messaging services. Staff must not post material (including text, video, audio or images) which damages the reputation of the school or which causes concern about their suitability to work with children. Staff must recognise that it is not appropriate to discuss issues relating to children or other staff via these networks. Those who post material, which could be considered as inappropriate, could render themselves vulnerable to criticism or allegations of misconduct.

It is never permissible to accept a friendship request from pupils at the school, as in almost all cases children of primary age using such networks will be breaching terms and conditions of use of those networks. It is also extremely inadvisable to accept as friend's ex-pupils who are still in education. If a parent seeks to establish contact, the member of staff should exercise their professional judgement. Under no circumstances should pupils be accepted as online friends of members of staff.

Any policy breach will be subject to the school's disciplinary policy and code of conduct.

The General Teaching Council for England revised the 'Code of Conduct and Practice' in 2009. The revision of the code focuses on professional boundaries and although there is no direct reference to social networking sites specifically, it requires teachers to establish and maintain appropriate relationships with children and young people. There is also a requirement to maintain reasonable standards of behaviour that enable teachers to maintain an effective learning environment and also to 'uphold public trust and confidence in the profession'.

GTCE Code states that teachers must:

- Establish and maintain appropriate professional boundaries in their relationships with pupils.
- Recognise the important role of the school in the life of the local community and take responsibility for upholding its reputation.
- Maintain reasonable standards of behaviour to maintain an effective learning environment and to uphold public trust and confidence.
- Communicate between children and adults, by what ever method, should take place within clear and explicit professional boundaries.

Social networking confidentiality issues:

Serious breach of commercial confidentiality, for example, where an employee posts confidential information belonging to a company on a web site. Also remarks that could clearly cause damage to the business's reputation, of which there have been some well publicised examples. The school expects that your behaviour in the electronic world will reflect the same standards of honest, respect and consideration that you use face-to-face with others.

Professional Responsibilities:

Do not talk about your professional role in any capacity when using social media such as Facebook or YouTube.

Ensure that your online activity both in school and outside of school, will not bring your organisation or professional role into disrepute.

Ensure any contact with pupils is kept strictly within an educational context.

Don't reveal names of colleagues or any other confidential information acquired through your job or social networking site or blog. This includes citing Werrington Primary School as your place of work under any online profile you may have.

Make your profile settings private i.e. Friends only on Facebook and remove anything that might cause potential problems with colleagues, your current or prospective employer, and always avoid inappropriate language, ill-advised comments or jokes.

Staff may only create blogs, wikis or other web 2 spaces in order to communicate with pupils using the LA Learning Platform or other systems approved by the Head teacher.

Our duty of care to our pupils and parents includes:

Pupils and parents are educated about safe use and boundaries of online technologies as part of the curriculum.

Pupils are taught to avoid placing images of themselves (or details within images that could give background details) on such sites and to consider the appropriateness of any images they post due to the difficulty of removing an image once online.

Pupils and parents are always reminded to avoid giving out personal details on such sites, which may identify them or where they are (full name, address, mobile/home numbers, school details, email address, specific hobbies/interests)

Our pupils are advised to set and maintain profiles on such sites to maximum privacy and deny access to unknown individuals.

Pupils are taught about copyright and respecting other people's information, images etc. through discussion, modelling and activities.

Where a pupil has poor social understanding, careful consideration is given to group interactions when raising awareness of eSafety.

Parents/carers are asked to read through and sign acceptable use agreements on behalf of their child on admission to the school.

Parents/ carers are required to make a decision as to whether they consent to images, video and audio of their child being taken and used in the public domain.

Parents / carers are expected to sign the Home School agreement

We will support the school approach to on-line safety and not deliberately upload or add any images, sounds or text that could upset or offend any member of the school community.

Our policy is to go further than just the letter of the law when it comes to handling personal information, and adopt good practice standards.

Email:

Under no circumstances should staff contact pupils, parents or conduct any school business using personal email addresses.

Staff sending emails to external organisations, parents or pupils are advised to cc. the Head teacher or line manager.

The forwarding of chain letters is not permitted in school. However the school has set up a dummy account (dropin@werrington.peterborough.sch.uk) to allow pupils to forward any emails causing them anxiety.

Whistle Blowing:

This section has been included in line with Werrington Primary School whistle-blowing policy, as part of the wider safeguarding procedure. In addition to the contact details below, the Headteacher should be informed of any breach of policy.

FACEBOOK:

Facebook has changed its procedure since the previous guidance was published. There is now a 'report abuse' button on its pages. However, many members will not be account holders. In this circumstance you are advised to follow this link:

http://www.facebook.com/help/contact.php?show_form=report_tos_violation You can find Facebook's Statement of Rights and Responsibilities here.

MY SPACE:

Click on the 'Report Abuse' link at the bottom of every user profile page and other user-generated pages. To report inappropriate images, click on the image and select the 'Report this Image' option. MySpace also has a dedicated email helpline for school employees at schoolcare@myspace.com. You can find MySpace's Terms of Use here and MySpace's Guide for School Administrators here.

BEBO:

Click on the 'Report Abuse' link that is located below the user's profile photo (top left-hand corner of screen) on every Bebo profile page. In addition, you can report specific media content (eg photos, videos and widgets) to the Bebo customer services team by clicking on the 'Report Abuse' link located below the content you wish to report. You can find Bebo's Terms of Service here.

TWITTER

The terms of service are not as clear as others regarding abusive comments. There is reference to 'specific threats of violence' and 'You may not use our service for any unlawful purposes' However, there are tight definitions of what constitutes violent threats. To further complicate matters. One needs to be a Twitter member to make a complaint.

YOU TUBE

To report an inappropriate video on YouTube, you need to create a free account, log in, then click the 'Flag' link under the video. To report any abuse issues on the site, go to YouTube's Abuse and Policy Centre where you can choose from a number of options related to inappropriate content, abusive users, video takedowns and privacy issues. You can find YouTube's Community Guidelines here and its Terms of Use here.

LITTLEGOSSIP

This is a relatively new site. Simply googling its name gives an indication of its unsavoury nature. Badged as an opportunity to 'share the latest university and college gossip', the site has much school content. The newspapers have described it as an independent school problem but this is not accurate. Postings are anonymous and are generally malicious, spiteful and salacious and have the potential to cause considerable discord in schools. Members can find out if their school is involved by using the drop down box on the front page. There is evidence that schools will be taken down following contact with the site.

Useful Links:

www.thinkuknow.co.uk

<http://www.e2bn.org/esafety>

www.epm.co.uk

<http://publications.education.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/cyberbullying-staff.pdf>

www.nextgenerationlearning.org.uk/safeguarding

www.tda.gov.uk