



Thurlstone Primary School

Social Media Policy

Social media and social networking sites play an important role in the lives of many people. We recognise that sites bring risks, but equally there are many benefits to be reaped. This policy gives clarity to the way in which social media/mobile phones are to be used by pupils, governors, visitors, parent helpers and school staff at Thurlstone Primary School. It will also provide guidance for parents.

There are four key areas:

- A. The use of social networking sites by pupils within school
- B. Use of social networking by staff in a personal capacity
- C. Comments posted by parents/carers
- D. Dealing with incidents of online bullying
- E. The use of social networking sites by pupils within school

A. The use of social networking sites by pupils within school

The school's Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) outlines the rules for using IT in school and these rules therefore apply to use of social networking sites. Such sites should not be used/accessed in school unless under the direction of a teacher and for a purpose clearly apparent from the learning objective of the relevant learning experience. If social media sites are used then staff should carry out a risk assessment to determine which tools are appropriate.

Social Media sites to be used in school include Twitter and Facebook. Parents will give permission for their child /children's work to be included on the sites.

In terms of private use of social networking sites by a child it is generally understood that children under the age of 13 are not permitted to be registered on them, including Facebook and Instagram to name two.

B. Use of social networking by staff in a personal capacity

It is possible that a high proportion of staff will have their own social networking site accounts. It is important for them to protect their professional reputation by ensuring that they use their personal accounts in an appropriate manner.

Guidelines are issued to staff:

- Staff must never add pupils as 'friends' into their personal accounts (including past pupils under the age of 16).
- Staff should not add parents as 'friends' into their personal accounts. Some staff may have parents who were "friends" from before they commenced a role at the school and they do not need to remove these friends as long as this does not cause issues.
- Staff must not post negative comments about the school, pupils, parents or colleagues including members of the Governing Body. Any concerns staff have should be taken to the Headteacher or a member of the SLT in the first instance.
- Staff must not use social networking sites within working hours (for personal use).

- It is expected that staff who are not at work due to illness do not use social networking sites within school times.
- Staff should only use social networking in a way that does not conflict with the current National Teachers Standards
- Staff should review and adjust their privacy settings to give them the appropriate level of privacy and confidentiality.
- Inappropriate use by staff should be referred to the Headteacher in the first instance and may lead to disciplinary action.

C. Comments posted by parents/carers

- Parents and carers will be made aware of their responsibilities regarding their use of social networking.
- Methods of school communication include the website, newsletters, letters and verbal discussion, with also some updates via Twitter and Facebook.
- School policies and documents provide further information regarding appropriate channels of communication and means of resolving differences of opinion. Effective communication following principles of mutual respect is the best means of ensuring the best learning experiences for the child.
- Parents must not post pictures of pupils, other than their own children, on social networking sites where these photographs have been taken at a school event.
- Parents should make complaints through official school channels rather than posting them on social networking sites.
- Parents should not post malicious or fictitious comments on social networking sites about any member of the school community.

D. Dealing with incidents of online bullying/inappropriate use of social networking sites

The school's Anti-Bullying Policy sets out the processes and sanctions regarding any type of bullying by a child on the school roll.

In the case of inappropriate use of social networking by parents, the Headteacher will contact the parent asking them to remove such comments and seek redress through the appropriate channels such as the Complaints Policy and will send a letter.

The Governing Body understands that, "There are circumstances in which police involvement is appropriate. These include where postings have a racist element or where violence is threatened or encouraged."

Furthermore, "Laws of defamation and privacy still apply to the web and it is unlawful for statements to be written...which:

- expose (an individual) to hatred, ridicule or contempt
- cause (an individual) to be shunned or avoided
- lower (an individual's) standing in the estimation of right-thinking members of society or
- disparage (an individual in their) business, trade, office or profession." (National Association of Headteachers)

Policy based on recommendations by The Key for School Leaders (national)