

Surfleet Primary School



Social Media Policy

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Introduction

The school is aware and acknowledges that increasing numbers of adults and children are using social networking sites. Those with the widest use include Facebook, Bebo, Twitter and MSN.

The widespread availability and use of social networking application bring opportunities to understand, engage and communicate with audiences in new ways. 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 reputation. A reputation held with the local communities and maintained by good reflections of our school, as governed and monitored by the Governing Body.

This policy and associated guidance is to protect staff and advise school leadership on how to deal with potential inappropriate use of social networking sites. 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 whilst providing a framework of good practice.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure:

- that the school is not exposed to legal risks,
- that the reputation of the school is not adversely affected,
- that our users are able to clearly distinguish where information provided via social networking applications is legitimately representative of the school.

„Facebook“ is targeted at older teenagers and adults. They have a no under 13 registration policy and recommend parental guidance for 13 to 16 year olds.

The following are extracts from „Facebook“ privacy policy:

“If you are under age 13, please do not attempt to register for Facebook or provide any personal information about yourself to us. If we learn that we have collected personal information from a child under age 13, we will delete that information as quickly as possible. If you believe that we might have any information from a child under age 13, please contact us.”

“We strongly recommend that minors 13 years of age or older ask their parents for permission before sending any information about themselves to anyone over the Internet and we encourage parents to teach their children about safe internet use practices. Materials to help parents talk to their children about safe internet use can be found on [Facebook Privacy Policy and Help] page.”

„MSN“ recommend 13 but do not appear to have a policy of debarring younger pupils. There are many primary age pupils active on both of these aforementioned social networking sites as well as others. The list within this policy is not an exhaustive list in any manner.

This guidance is to advise and protect staff from accusations of improper relationships with pupils.

Scope

This policy covers the use of social networking applications by all school stakeholders, including employees, governors, pupils and the parents of pupils. These groups are referred to collectively as „school representatives“ for brevity.

The requirements of this policy apply to all uses of social networking applications which are used for any school related purpose and regardless of whether the 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, for example „Blogger“
- Online discussion forums, such as „netmums.com“
- Collaborative spaces, such as „Facebook“
- Media sharing services, for example „YouTube“
- „Micro-blogging applications, for example „Twitter“

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’s Equality and Diversity Policy.

Use of Social Networking sites

Use of social networking applications in work time for personal use only is not permitted, unless permission has been given by the Leadership Team.

Social Networking as part of School Service

All proposals for using social networking applications as part of a school service, whether they are hosted by the school or by a third party, must be approved by the schools leadership team first.

Use of social networking applications which are related to any school services (for example, contributing to a wiki provided by a professional association) does not need to be approved by the leadership team. However, school representatives must still operate in line with the requirements set out within the policy.

School representatives must adhere to the following „Terms of Use“. The „Terms of Use“ below apply to all uses of social networking applications by all school representatives. This includes, but is not limited to, public facing applications such as open discussion forums and internally-facing uses such as project blogs regardless of whether they are hosted on school network or not.

Where applications allow the posting of messages online, users must be mindful that the right to freedom of expression attaches only to lawful conduct. Our school expects that users of social networking applications will always exercise the right of freedom of expression with due consideration for the rights of others and strictly in accordance with these „Terms of Use“.

Terms of Use

Social Networking applications

- Must not be used to publish any content which may result in actions for defamation, discrimination, breaches of copyright, data protection or other claim for damages. This includes, but is not limited to, material of an illegal, sexual or offensive nature that may bring the school into disrepute.

- Must not be used for the promotion of personal financial interests, commercial ventures or personal campaigns.
- Must not be used in an abusive or hateful manner.
- Must not be used for actions that would put school representatives in breach of school codes of conduct or policies relating to staff.
- Must not breach the school's misconduct, equal opportunities or bullying and harassment policies.
- Must not be used to discuss or advise any matters relating to school matters, Staff, pupils or parents.
- No staff member should have a pupil or former pupil under the age of 18 as a „friend“ to share information with.
- Employees should not identify themselves as a representative of the school.
- References should not be made to any staff member, pupil, parent or school activity unless prior permission has been obtained and agreed with the school leadership team.
- Staff should be aware that if their out-of-work activity causes potential embarrassment for the employer or detrimentally affects the employer's reputation then the employer is entitled to take disciplinary action.
- Pupils and Parents should be aware that if any discussions or mentions of the school or other individuals related to the school, or indeed events that have taken place in school, will not be tolerated and will be deemed inappropriate.

Violation of this policy by employees will be considered as gross misconduct and can result in disciplinary action being taken against the employee up to and including termination of employment.

Violation of this policy by parents or pupils of the school will be considered as inappropriate and can result in the parents and or pupils being reported to the Local Authority and or the Police, dependent upon the nature of the disclosure.

Guidance/protection for staff on using social networking

- No member of staff should interact with any pupil in the school on social networking sites.
- No member of staff should interact with any ex-pupil in the school on social networking sites who is under the age of 18.
- This means that no member of the school staff should request access to a pupil's area on the social networking site. Neither should they permit the pupil access to the staff members' area e.g. by accepting them as a friend.
- Where family and friends have pupils in school and there are legitimate family links, please inform the leadership team in writing. However, pupils and staff must not network during the working day on school or personal equipment.
- It is illegal for an adult to network, giving their age and status as a child.
- If you have any evidence of pupils or adults using social networking sites in the working day, please contact the named Senior Designated Person for Child Protection in school.

Guidance/protection for pupils on using social networking

- No pupil under 13 should be accessing social networking sites. This is the guidance from both „Facebook“ and „MSN“. There is a mechanism on „Facebook“ whereby pupils can be reported via the help screen.
- No pupil may access social networking sites during the school working day.
- No pupils may use a mobile phone on the school site.
- No pupil should attempt to join a staff member's areas on networking sites. If pupils attempt to do this, the member of staff is to inform the leadership team. Parents will be informed if this happens.
- No school computers are to be used to access social networking sites at any time of day.
- Any attempts to breach firewalls will result in a ban from using school ICT equipment.
- Report any improper contact or cyber bullying to the class teacher straightaway.
- A zero tolerance to cyber bullying is expected from all stakeholders.

Safeguarding Children

If the leadership team receives a disclosure that an adult employed by the school is using a social networking site in an inappropriate manner as detailed above they should:

Record the disclosure on a Safeguarding Children form (available in the office).

Schools must refer the matter to the Local Area Designated Officer, located at the Local Authority.

If the disclosure has come from a parent, take normal steps to calm the parent and explain processes.

If disclosure comes from a member of staff, try to maintain confidentiality.

The Local Authority will advise whether the member of staff should be suspended pending investigation after contact with the police. It is not recommended that action is taken until advice has been given.

If disclosure is from a child, follow your normal process in your child protection policy until the police investigation has been carried out.

Cyber Bullying

By adopting the recommended no use of social networking sites on school premises, our school protects itself from accusations of complicity in any cyber bullying through the provision of access.

Parents should be clearly aware of the school's policy of access to social networking sites.

Where a disclosure of bullying is made, schools now have the duty to investigate and protect, even where the bullying originates outside the school.

Once disclosure is made, investigation will have to involve the families. If parents or carers refuse to engage and bullying continues, it can be referred to the police as harassment.

This guidance can also apply to text and mobile phone cyber bullying.

Monitoring and Review

There is a two yearly review of this policy by the Curriculum Coordinator.

Revised September 2014