St. Wilfrid’s Catholic Primary School:

Social Media Policy for Staff, Governors, Children and Parent/Carers

April 2019
Introduction

St Wilfrid’s Catholic Primary School (the School) is aware and recognises that increasing numbers of adults and children are using social media and networking sites (social media). The two, currently, with the widest use are Facebook and Twitter. The widespread availability and use of social media applications 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. This policy and associated guidance is to protect staff and advise the School Leadership Team (SLT) on how to deal with potential inappropriate use of social media. For example, when use of social media has implications for our duty to safeguard children.

The policy requirements in this document aim to provide this balance to support innovation whilst providing a framework of good practice.

Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to ensure:

- That our duty to safeguard children is always at the forefront of our actions.
- That the school community are able to distinguish where information provided via social media is legitimately representative of the school.
- That the school and its members of staff and children are not exposed to legal risks.
- That the reputation of the school is not adversely affected.

Scope

This policy covers the use of social media by all school stakeholders, including, governors, staff, volunteers, pupils and parents/carers.

The requirements of this policy apply to all uses of social media for any school related purpose, regardless of whether the School Stakeholders are contributing in an official capacity to social media provided by external organisations.

Social media applications include, but are not limited to:

- Online discussion forums, such as netmums.com
- Collaborative spaces, such as Facebook
- Media sharing services, for example YouTube
- Blogs and ‘Micro-blogging’ applications, for example Twitter
- Games sites, for example Minecraft, Roblox
- Interactive console games, for example Call of Duty, Fortnite

All School Stakeholders should bear in mind that information they share through social media 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 other policies.

Use of Social Media in School Time

Use of social media in work time, by staff (including governors and volunteers), for personal use only is not permitted, unless permission has been given by the Headteacher. Children should not access social media under any circumstances whilst at school (this includes any after school clubs or PTA events); only children that walk unaccompanied to school are allowed to bring a mobile phone with them. If this is the case, the mobile phone should be signed in at the school office as soon as they arrive and it should be signed out again as the child leaves the premises. Parent/carers should refrain from using their mobile phones for any purpose whilst on the school site.

Social Media as Part of School Service

All proposals for using social media as part of a school activity (whether they are hosted by the school or by a third party) must be approved in advance by the Headteacher or a member of the SLT.

Uses of social media which are not related to any school activity (for example, contributing to a wiki provided by a professional association) does not need to be approved by the Headteacher. However, School Stakeholders must still operate in line with the requirements set out within this policy. School Stakeholders must adhere to the following Terms of Use.
Terms of Use

Social Media 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 exploit connections with the school 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 other 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 from the Headteacher.
- 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.

Violation of this policy will be considered as gross misconduct and can result in disciplinary action being taken against the employee up to and including termination of employment.
Guidance and Protection for Staff on Using Social Media

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.

Accordingly:

- No member of staff should interact with any pupil of the school on social media.
- No member of staff should interact with any ex-pupil of the school on social media 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 media site. Neither should they permit the pupil access to the staff members' area e.g. by accepting them as a friend.
- Staff are strongly advised not to add parents of pupils at the school as 'friends' on a social media site.
- Where family and friends have pupils in school and there are legitimate family links, please inform the Headteacher in writing. However, it would not be appropriate to network during the working day on school equipment.
- Staff should only use social media in a way that does not conflict with the current National Teachers' Standards.
- Staff must not post comments about the school, pupils, parents or colleagues including members of the Governing Board.
- Staff should review and adjust their privacy settings to give them the appropriate level of privacy and confidentiality.
- Inappropriate use of social media by staff should be referred to the Headteacher in the first instance and may lead to disciplinary action being taken against the member of staff, up to and including termination of employment.
- It is illegal for an adult to network, giving their age and status as a child.
- If a member of staff has any evidence of pupils or adults using social media sites in the working day, the Designated Safeguarding Leads should be informed.
Guidance and Protection for Governors and Other Volunteers on Using Social Media

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

Accordingly:

- No Governor or volunteer should interact with any pupil of the school on social media.
- No Governor or volunteer should interact with any ex-pupil of the school on social media sites who is under the age of 18.
- This means that no Governor or volunteer should request access to a pupil's area on the social media site. Neither should they permit the pupil access to their area e.g. by accepting them as a friend.
- Governors and/or volunteers are strongly advised not to add parents of pupils at the school as ‘friends’ to a social media site.
- Where family and friends have pupils in school and there are legitimate family links, please inform the Headteacher in writing. However, it would not be appropriate to network during the working day on school equipment.
- Governors and/or volunteers must not post comments about the school, pupils, parents or colleagues including members of the Governing Board.
- Governors and/or volunteers should review and adjust their privacy settings to give them the appropriate level of privacy and confidentiality.
- Inappropriate use by Governors and/or volunteers should be referred to the Headteacher in the first instance.
- It is illegal for an adult to network, giving their age and status as a child.
- If Governors or volunteers have any evidence of the use of social media during the working day, the Designated Safeguarding Leads should be informed.
Guidance and Protection for Pupils on Using Social Media

- No pupil should have access to any social media site for which they are underage. (See notes on Age Guidelines below)
- No pupil may access social media sites during the school working day.
- Only children walking to school unaccompanied are permitted to bring a mobile phone into school. All pupil mobile phones must be handed into the office at the beginning of the school day, the internet capability must be switched off. Failure to follow this guidance will result in a total ban for the pupil bringing a mobile phone to school.
- Any pupil found using a mobile phone during school time will have the mobile phone confiscated and their parent/carer will be required to come into school to collect the phone from a member of the SLT.
- No pupil should attempt to join a staff member's area on social media (i.e. send a friend request etc.). If a pupil attempts to do this, the member of staff is to inform the Headteacher immediately. Parents will also be informed if this happens.
- No school computers are to be used to access social media sites at any time of day.
- Any attempts to breach firewalls or the school's filtering system will result in a ban from using school computing equipment other than under close supervision.
- Any improper contact or cyber bullying must be reported to the class teacher in confidence as soon as it happens.
- There is a zero tolerance to cyber bullying (see below).
Guidance for Parent/carers on Using Social Media

Parent/carers should take great care in their use of social media. They should be aware of the minimum age limits of social media sites and not allow their children to access them if they are underage.

Parent/carers are advised that it is best practice never to allow their children unrestricted internet access and should take steps to ensure their children do not have access to inappropriate sites. There are many suitable parental controls available free of charge and we strongly recommend that these are used to block unsuitable websites and applications. Ideally children should always be in the same room as a responsible adult when playing interactive games that have access to the internet and enable communication between players.

It cannot be stressed strongly enough how important it is children are taught that they have no way of telling if the person they are interacting with online is actually who they say they are.

- Parent/carers are strongly advised not to add members of the school staff as ‘friends’ to a social media site.
- Parent/carers should not post pictures, videos etc. of children (other than their own) from the school, to any social media site, where these photographs have been taken at a school event.
- Parent/carers should not post comments about the school, staff, governors, pupils or other parent/carers that are in contravention of this policy.
- Parent/carers should not make complaints about the school on social media but should use the official school channels.
- Parent/carers should not post malicious or fictitious comments on social media sites about the school or any member of the school community.
- Parent/carers should review and adjust their privacy settings to give them the appropriate level of privacy and confidentiality.
- Parent/carers should report any concerns regarding social media posts involving the school or its stakeholders to the school as soon as is reasonably practical.
- Parent/carers should ensure that their children play only age appropriate video games etc. Parent/carers may find the Pan European Game Information (PEGI) rating on the packaging of the video game. This is especially important in the case of games that have an internet option. If a child is playing a Pegi 18+ game anyone interacting with them may, rightly, assume that the player is over 18. This, obviously, has the likelihood of causing major safeguarding concerns, for both the child and their parents. It is in everyone’s best interest that parent/carers are able to see and hear everything that their child is doing online, even if they are simply playing a game.
Child Protection Guidance

If the Headteacher receives a disclosure that a member of staff is using a Social Media site in an inappropriate manner as detailed above the Headteacher will:

- Record the disclosure in line with the school’s safeguarding and child protection procedures.
- Refer the matter to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) who will investigate via the West Sussex Safeguarding Children Board.

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

If disclosure comes from a member of staff, take all steps to maintain confidentiality and follow the above steps.

If disclosure is from a child, follow the normal safeguarding and child protection procedures until the police investigation has been carried out.

The LADO 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.

Cyber Bullying and Inappropriate Use of Social Media

By adopting the above policy of not allowing any use of social media sites on school premises (except on official school media applications, should they exist), St Wilfrid’s Catholic Primary School, is protected from accusations of complicity in any cyber bullying through the provision of access.

Parent/carers should be clearly aware of the school’s policy of access to social media sites.

Where a disclosure of bullying is made, schools now have the duty to investigate and protect, even where the bullying originates from outside the school. This can be a complex area, and these examples might help:

- A child is receiving taunts online and by text from an ex-pupil who left the school for another three months ago: This is not a school responsibility, though the school would contact the new school to broker a resolution.
- A child is receiving taunts from peers. It is all at weekends using texts. As the pupils are members of the school the school has a duty of care to investigate and work with the families concerned.
- A child is receiving taunts from peers. It is all at weekends using Facebook (or another Social Media application), the pupils are in Y5: This is a difficult situation to resolve. The school has a duty of care to investigate and work with
the families, as they attend the school. However, the school are also fully within their rights to warn all the parents (including those of the victim) that they are condoning the use of Facebook outside the terms and conditions of the site and that they are expected to ensure that use of the site stops. At any further similar referral to the school we could legitimately say that the victims and perpetrators had failed to follow the school’s recommendation. The school would then deal with residual bullying, but refuse to deal with the social media issues.

- Once a disclosure is made, an investigation will have to involve the families. This should be dealt with under the school’s anti bullying policy.
- If parent/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, and via use of apps such as WhatsApp, Snapchat etc. and also through online forums and interactive games played via games consoles.

In the case of inappropriate use of social media and/or malicious, fictitious or defamatory remarks or comments posted on social media by parent/carers, the Governors of St Wilfrid’s will contact the parent/carer asking them to remove such comments and seek redress through the appropriate channels.

The Governors understand 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)
Age Guidelines for Using Social Media

In most cases the minimum age limit for using social media is 13. Therefore none of the pupils attending St Wilfrid’s should have a social media account. Although there are a number of sites aimed at children younger than 13, such as Club Penguin, Minecraft, Moshi Monsters, Roblox these generally require the parent/carer to input their email address to verify them. Below are the minimum age limits for applications that are currently popular, please bear in mind that new sites and games are appearing every day and this list cannot be deemed to be exhaustive in any way.

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Please check the terms and conditions of use of any device or application that allows your child access to social media.