



SOCIAL NETWORKING POLICY

March 2016

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School
Social Networking Policy
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St Joseph's is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

Objectives

- This policy sets out St Joseph's Catholic Primary School's policy on social networking. Social networking activities conducted inside or outside of school, such as blogging, involvement in social networking sites such as Facebook or Twitter and posting material, images or comments on sites such as You Tube can have a negative effect on the school's reputation or image. In addition, St Joseph's School has a firm commitment to safeguarding children in all aspects of school life.
- This policy has been written to set out the key principles and code of conduct that are expected of all members of staff, pupils, academy committee members, volunteers parents and anybody else associate with the school with respect to their responsibilities in connection with the use of social networking sites.

Aims

- To set out the key principles and code of conduct expected of all members of staff, academy committee members and volunteers at St Joseph's School with respect to social networking.
- To further safeguard and protect children and staff.
- Whilst recognizing the benefits which social media can have for children and those associated with the school to put in place a framework for safe use of such technologies and to prevent misuse or cause harm or offence to the school or those associated with it.
- It is intended to promote sensible and responsible use of new technologies by adults and children

Key Principles

- Staff, children, academy committee members, volunteers and parents at St Joseph's School have a responsibility to ensure that they protect the reputation of the school, and to treat all members of the school with professionalism and respect.
- It is important to protect everyone at St Joseph's from allegations and misinterpretations which can arise from the use of social networking sites.
- Safeguarding children is a key responsibility of all members of staff and it is essential that everyone at St Joseph's School considers this and acts responsibly if they are using social networking sites.
- Anyone working in the school either as a paid employee or volunteer must not communicate with children via social networking.

- This policy relates to social networking outside of school. Blogging and accessing social networking sites at school or at home using school equipment is not permitted, unless for professional purposes and authorised by the Principal.

Overview and Expectations

- All adults working with children have a responsibility to maintain confidence in their ability to safeguard the welfare and best interests of children. It is therefore expected that they will adopt the highest standards of personal conduct in order to maintain the confidence and respect of their colleagues, children, and all those with whom they work. Adults in contact with children should therefore understand and be aware that safe practice also involves using judgement and integrity about behaviours in places other than in a school setting.
- The guidance contained in this policy is an attempt to identify what behaviours are expected of schools' staff who work with children. Anyone whose practice deviates from this document and/or their professional or employment-related code of conduct may bring into question their suitability to work with children and young people and may result in disciplinary or legal action being taken against them.
- School staff should always maintain appropriate professional boundaries and avoid behaviour, during their use of the internet and other communication technologies, which might be misinterpreted by others. They should report and record any incident with this potential.
- It is expected that Parents or Guardians provide adequate supervision for children such that they provide protection from misuse which cause offence of distress to anyone else associated with the school.

Code of Conduct: Social Networking

Under no circumstances should staff make reference to any staff member, pupil, parent or school activity/event.

The following are also **not considered acceptable** at St Joseph's School:

- The use of the school's name, logo, or any other published material without written prior permission from the Principal. This applies to any published material including the internet or written documentation.
- The posting of any communication or images which links the school to any form of illegal conduct or which may damage the reputation of the school. This includes defamatory comments.
- The disclosure of confidential or business-sensitive information; or the disclosure of information or images that could compromise the security of the school or safety of any member of the school community.
- The posting of any images of employees, children, academy committee members or anyone directly connected with the school whilst engaged in school activities.
- 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.

In addition to the above everyone at St Joseph's School must ensure that they:

- Communicate with children and parents in an open and transparent way using the school phone number and email address.
- Never 'friend' a pupil at the school where they are working onto their social networking site.
- Do not make any derogatory, defamatory, rude, threatening or inappropriate comments about the school, or anyone at or connected with the school.
- Use social networking sites responsibly and ensure that neither their personal nor professional reputation, nor the school's reputation is compromised by inappropriate postings.
- Parents that choose to set-up a class home page on a social networking site must follow the code of conduct outlined above. The school does not endorse the creation of this form of networking and this disassociation with the site must be outlined as part of the Mission Statement at the top of the page. The school name or logo must not be used and comments about staff, pupils, parents and academy committee members must not be referenced. Parents are encouraged to use the usual forms of communication i.e. school website of phone number if they require any information or have any concerns that they wish to raise. Inappropriate comments that may bring the school or its members into disrepute will not be tolerated and advice from the Local Authority will be sought if this situation arises.
- Are aware of the potential of on-line identity fraud and to be cautious when giving out personal information about themselves which may compromise their personal safety and security

Potential and Actual Breaches of the Code of Conduct

In instances where there has been a breach of the above Code of Conduct, the following will apply:

- Any breaches of this policy will be fully investigated. Where it is found that there has been a breach of the policy this may result in action being taken under the Disciplinary Procedure. A breach of this policy will be considered to be a serious disciplinary offence which is also contrary to the school's ethos and principles. If any potential safeguarding issue arises then appropriate action must be taken in accordance with the safeguarding policy and reported and investigated accordingly.
- The Academy Committee will take appropriate action in order to protect the school's reputation and that of its staff, parents, academy committee members, children and anyone else directly linked to the school.
- Whilst every attempt has been made to cover a wide range of situations, it is recognised that this policy cannot cover all eventualities. There may be times when professional judgements are made in situations not covered by this document, or which directly contravene the standards outlined in this document. It is expected that in these circumstances staff will always advise the Principal of the justification for any such action already taken or proposed. The Principal will in turn seek advice from Dudley Metropolitan

Borough Council where appropriate. This policy takes account of employment legislation and best practice guidelines in relation to social networking in addition to the legal obligations of governing bodies and the relevant legislation.

Safer Online Behaviour

- Some social networking sites and other web-based sites have fields in the user profile for job title etc. ***If you are an employee of a school and particularly if you are a teacher, you should not put any information onto the site that could identify either your profession or the school where you work. In some circumstances this could damage the reputation of the school, the profession or the local authority.***
- In their own interests, staff need to be aware of the dangers of putting personal information onto social networking sites, such as addresses, home and mobile phone numbers. This will avoid the potential for children or their families or friends having access to staff outside of the school environment. It also reduces the potential for identity theft by third parties. All staff, particularly new staff, should review their social networking sites when they join the school to ensure that information available publicly about them is accurate and appropriate. This includes any photographs that may cause embarrassment to themselves and the school if they are published outside of the site.
- All School members need to ensure that when they are communicating about others, even outside of the school environment, that they give due regard to the potential for defamation of character. Making allegations on social networking sites (even in their own time and in their own homes) about other employees, children or other individuals connected with the school, or another school, or Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council could result in formal action being taken against them. This includes the uploading of photographs which might put the school into disrepute.

Mobile Phones/Camera/Video Recorder Usage

To ensure the safety and welfare of children in our care personal mobile phones, cameras and video recorders must not be used when children are present.

- All mobile phones must be kept in a secure place (not in a pocket), switched off and not be accessed throughout contact time with the children.
- In exceptional circumstances, which have been discussed and agreed with a member of the senior leadership team, staff may keep their phone switched on and accessible as long as they use their phone out of view of children, i.e. in a room designated for staff, e.g. the staff room or an office.
- During school visits mobile phones should be used away from the children and for emergency purposes only.
- Photographs or images of any children within our care may only be taken following parental consent and only using one of the school cameras / iPads. These images should remain within this setting or be shared only with the parents of the child concerned.
- Personal mobiles, cameras or video recorders cannot be used to record classroom activities. **ONLY** school property can be used for this.

- School photographs and recordings can only be transferred to, and stored on a school computer.

Protection of Personal Information

- Staff should not give their personal e-mail addresses to children or parents. Where there is a need for communication to be sent electronically the school e-mail address should be used. Likewise staff should keep their personal phone numbers private and not use their own mobile phones to contact children or parents in a professional capacity. There will be occasions when there are social contacts between children and staff, where for example the parent and teacher are part of the same social circle or staff are transport escorts. These contacts however, will be easily recognised and openly acknowledged. Staff have a responsibility to make any such contact known to the senior leadership team.
- Staff should never share their school log-ins or passwords with other people.
- Staff are advised to understand who is allowed to view the content on their pages of the sites they use and how to restrict access to certain groups of people.

Access to Inappropriate Images and Internet Usage

- There are no circumstances that will justify adults possessing indecent or inappropriate images of children. Staff who access and possess links to such websites will be viewed as a significant and potential threat to children. Accessing, making and storing indecent images of children is illegal. This will lead to criminal investigation and the individual being barred from working with children, if proven.
- Staff should not use equipment belonging to their school/service to access any pornography; neither should personal equipment containing these images or links to them be brought into the workplace. This will raise serious concerns about the suitability of the adult to continue to work with children and may result in reports to the appropriate authority concerning their behavior.
- Where indecent images of children are found by staff, the police should be immediately informed. Schools should not attempt to investigate the matter or evaluate the material themselves, as this may lead to evidence being contaminated which in itself can lead to a criminal prosecution.
- Where other unsuitable material is found, which may not be illegal but which raises concerns about that member of staff, the E-Safety Officer (Heather Jevons) for Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council will be informed and advice sought. The school should not attempt to investigate or evaluate the material themselves until such advice is received.

Cyberbullying

- St Joseph's definition of cyberbullying is ***'the use of modern communication technologies to embarrass, humiliate, threaten or intimidate an individual in the attempt to gain power and control over them.'***
- 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 Academy Committee will contact the parent asking them to remove such comments and seek redress through the appropriate channels such as the Complaints Policy.

- In order to reduce the potential for cyberbullying children are not allowed to bring phones into the classroom. These are to be taken to the school office at the beginning of the school day and then collected after school.
- Prevention activities are key to ensuring that staff are protected from the potential threat of cyberbullying. All employees are reminded of the need to protect themselves from the potential threat of cyberbullying. Following the advice contained in this guidance should reduce the risk of personal information falling into the wrong hands.
- If cyberbullying does take place, employees should keep records of the abuse, text, e-mails, website or instant message and should not delete texts or e-mails. Employees are advised to take screen prints of messages or web pages and be careful to record the time, date and place of the site.
- Staff are encouraged to report all incidents of cyberbullying to their line manager or the Principal. All such incidents will be taken seriously and will be dealt with in consideration of the wishes of the person who has reported the incident. It is for the individual who is being bullied to decide whether they wish to report the actions to the police.
- The Academy Committee 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:
 1. expose (*an individual*) to hatred, ridicule or contempt
 2. cause (*an individual*) to be shunned or avoided
 3. lower (*an individual's*) standing in the estimation of right-thinking members of society or
 4. disparage (*an individual in their*) business, trade, office or profession.” (National Association of Head teachers)

Link with Other Policies

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

- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Everyone who is associated with the school must adhere to, and apply the principles of the policy. Failure to do so may lead to action being taken under the disciplinary procedure.

Review of Policy

Due to the ever changing nature of information and communication technologies it is best practice that this policy be reviewed annually.

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| This policy was adopted by the Academy Committee on: | March 2016 |
| Chair of Academy Committee: | Mrs Sarah Price |

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| Principal: | Mr Andrew Carry |
| Date of Policy Review: | March 2017 |