



Garswood Primary School Social Media and Social Networking Policy



Policy Statement:

What is Social Media?

For the purpose of this policy, social media is the term commonly used for websites which allow people to interact with each other in some way – by sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interests. Social networking websites such as **Facebook, Bebo and MySpace** are perhaps the most well known examples of social media but the term also covers other web based services such as blogs, video and audio podcasts, wikis, message boards, photo document and video sharing websites such as YouTube and micro blogging services such as Twitter. This definition of social media is not exhaustive as technology develops with new ways of communicating advancing every day.

For the purpose of this document the terminology Social Media is not exhaustive and also applies to the use of communication technologies such as **mobile phones, cameras, PDAs / PSPs, Nintendo DS, iPhones** or other handheld devices and any other emerging forms of communications technologies.

What are the implications of social networking for Schools?

The widespread availability and use of **social networking applications** bring opportunities to understand, engage and communicate with our audiences in new and exciting ways. It is important that , at Garswood, 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 duties to our School Community and children, our legal responsibilities and our reputation.

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 and Schools of the 21st Century, whilst providing a framework of good practice. They apply to all members as defined by School representatives.

Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to ensure:

- That Garswood Primary School, its leaders/governors are not exposed to legal risks
- That the reputation of Garswood Primary School, staff and governors at the school are not adversely affected
- **All children are safeguarded**
- That any users are able to clearly distinguish where information provided via social networking applications is legitimately representative of Garswood Primary School.
- Assist schools' staff working with children to work safely and responsibly with the internet and other communication technologies and to monitor their own standards and practice
- Set clear expectations of behaviour and/or codes of practice relevant to social networking for educational, personal or recreational use
- Give a clear message that unlawful or unsafe behaviour is unacceptable and that, where appropriate, disciplinary or legal action will be taken
- Support safer working practice
- Minimise the risk of misplaced or malicious allegations made against adults who work with pupils
- Reduce the incidence of positions of trust being abused or misused

Scope

This policy covers the use of **social networking applications** by School Employees. These groups are referred to collectively as 'School representatives' for the purpose of this policy.

They must also be considered where School representatives are contributing in an official capacity to **social networking applications** provided by external organisations.

Examples of Type of Social Networks....

- Social networking applications include, but are not limited to:
- Blogs
- Online discussion forums
- Collaborative spaces
- Media sharing services
- 'Microblogging' applications.

Actual Examples include.....

- Twitter (age restrictions)
- Facebook (age restrictions)
- MSN
- You Tube
- Life (password protected and monitored)

Many of the principles of this policy also apply to other types of online presence such as virtual worlds.

Principles:

Adults who work with pupils are responsible for their own actions and behaviour and should avoid any conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question their motivation and intentions.

Staff in schools should work and be seen to work, in an open and transparent way.

Staff in schools should continually monitor and review their practice in terms of the continually evolving world of **social networking** and ensure they follow the guidance contained in this document.

Garswood Primary School's Non Negotiables:

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 and Local Authority Equality and Safeguarding Policies.

School staff will not invite, accept or engage in communications with children from the school community on any personal social networking sites while in employment at Garswood Primary School.

School staff are strongly advised not to invite, accept or engage in communications with parents or carers from the school community on any personal social networking sites while in employment at Garswood Primary School. In any instance where a member of staff does not abide by the advice they do so at their own risk and will not receive any support from the Governing Body as a result of their action. Governors do not accept any liability for any resulting actions from staff using social networking sites.

Any communication received from children to School Representatives must be immediately reported to the Head Teacher – Designated Child Protection Officer and procedures for safeguarding followed.

If a School Representative is made aware of any other inappropriate communications involving any child and social networking. These must be reported immediately as above. School E safety policy must be used at all times when children use ICT and access the internet in school.

Safer Online Behaviour

- Managing personal information effectively makes it far less likely that information will be misused.
- 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 pupils 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.
- Staff should never 'friend' a pupil at the school where they are working onto their social networking site.
- Staff should never accept an invitation to 'friend' a pupil.

- Confidentiality needs to be considered at all times. Social networking sites have the potential to discuss inappropriate information and employees need to ensure that they do not put any confidential information on their site about themselves, their employer, their colleagues, pupils or members of the public.

Enforcement

Any breach of the terms set out below could result in the application or offending content being removed in accordance with the published complaints procedure and the publishing rights of the responsible School representative being suspended in accordance with the schools discipline policy.

The School reserves the right to require the closure of any applications or removal of content published by School representatives which may adversely affect the reputation of the School or put it at risk of legal action.

Any communications or content you publish that causes damage to the School, Local Authority, any of its employees or any third party's reputation may amount to misconduct or gross misconduct to which the School Disciplinary Policies apply.

Where applications allow the posting of messages online, (including email and website) users must be mindful that the right to freedom of expression attaches only to lawful conduct.

Garswood 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.

Related Documentation

- Complaints Procedure
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Equality Policy
- ICT and Website Policy
- E safety Policy
- Agreed by Governors at Garswood Primary School

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following documents for schools:

Link to Policy / Document Relevance

- **IT Security Standards & Policies** - The standards outlined in the schools IT Security Standards and Policies documents should be followed when using social networking sites.

- **Disciplinary Policy and Procedure** - Use of social networking sites which is not in accordance with this policy or the School's policies may amount to misconduct or gross misconduct under the school's disciplinary policy and procedure.
- **Fairness and Dignity at Work Policy** - Where use of social networking sites can be interpreted to constitute a form of bullying or harassment of another member of staff this may be dealt with under the fairness and dignity at work policy in the first instance.
- **Equal Opportunities Policy** - Use of social networking sites should be at all times in accordance with the school's equal opportunities in employment policy.
- **Code of Conduct and Guidelines for Safe Working Practices for the Protection of Children and Staff** - The code sets out the standards of conduct expected of employees including maintaining the school's reputation, non-disclosure of confidential information and standards of behaviour expected.
- **Guidance for Safer Working Practice for Adults who Work with Children and Young People** - This document provides safeguarding guidance for all employees who work with children, young people and also vulnerable adults, including guidance around communication with young people, photography and video.

Les Moon (ICT lead) January 2021