

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Bognor Regis



Social Media Policy

January 2022

ST MARY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL BOGNOR REGIS, 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 gives clarity to the way in which social media/mobile phones are to be used by pupils, social media/mobile phones are to be used by pupils, governors, visitors, parent helpers and school staff at St Mary's Catholic 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**

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 blogging sites (Primary blogger) and Twitter. Parents will give permission for children to access these sites in school as well as permission for images of their child / child's work to be included on the site. (See social Media consent form)

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, 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 for staff (see appendix for further guidance):

- Staff must **never** add pupils as 'friends' into their personal accounts (including past pupils under the age of 16).
- Staff are **strongly advised** not to add parents as 'friends' into their personal accounts.
- Staff **must not** post or make comments about the school, pupils, parents or colleagues including members of the Governing Body.
- Staff must not use social networking sites within lesson times (for personal use).
- Staff should only use social networking in a way that does not conflict with the current National Teacher's Standards.

- Staff should review and adjust their privacy settings to give them the appropriate level of privacy and confidentiality.
- Staff should read and comply with 'Guidance for Safer Working Practice for Adults who Work with Children and Young People'.
- 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 prospectus, the website, newsletters, letters and verbal discussion. 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 Governing Body 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)

APPENDIX – Rules for staff on social media including but not limited to Facebook, Snapchat, TikTok, Twitter and Instagram.

1. Change your display name - use your first and middle name, use a maiden name, or put your surname backwards instead. **Never accept friend requests from pupils on social media.**
2. Change your profile picture to something unidentifiable, or if not, ensure that the image is professional
3. Check your privacy settings regularly
4. Be careful about tagging other staff members in images or posts
5. Don't share anything publicly that you wouldn't be just as happy showing your pupils
6. Don't use social media sites in school hours
7. Don't make comments about your job, your colleagues, your school or your pupils online- once it's out there, it's out there
8. Don't associate yourself with your school on your profile (e.g. by setting it as your workplace, or by 'checking in' at a school event)
9. Don't link your work email address to your social media accounts. Anyone who has this address (or your personal email address/mobile number) is able to find you using this information
10. Consider uninstalling the Facebook app from your phone, The app recognises wi-fi connections and makes friend suggestions based on who else uses the same wi-fi connection (such as parents or pupils)

Check your privacy settings

Change the visibility of your posts and photos to 'Friends only', rather than 'Friends of friends'. Otherwise pupils and their families may still be able to read your posts, see things you've shared and look at your pictures if they're friends with anybody on your contacts list

Don't forget to check your old posts and photos – go to bit.ly/2MdQXMN to find out how to limit the visibility of previous posts

The public may still be able to see posts you've 'liked', even if your profile settings are private, because this depends on the privacy settings of the original poster

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Google your name to see what information about you is visible to the public.

Prevent search engines from indexing your profile so that people can't search for you by name – go to bit.ly/2ZMdVht to find how to do this

Remember that some information is always public; your display name, profile picture, cover photo, user ID (in the URL for your profile), country, age range and gender.

What to do if...

A pupil adds you on social media

- In the first instance, ignore and delete the request. Block the pupil from viewing your profile
- Check your privacy settings again, and consider changing your display name or profile picture
- If the pupil asks you about the friend request in person, remind them of your school's social media policy or tell them that you're not allowed to accept friend requests from pupils and that if they persist, you'll have to notify senior leadership and or their parents. If the pupil persists, take a screenshot of their request and any accompanying messages
- Notify your senior leadership team (SLT) or headteacher about what is happening

A parent adds you on social media

It is at your discretion, in accordance with your school's social media policy, whether to respond. Bear in mind that:

- Responding to one parent's friend request or message might set an unwelcome precedent for both you and other teachers at the school
- Pupils may then have indirect access through their parent's account to anything you post, share, comment on or are tagged in
- If you wish to decline the offer or ignore a message, consider drafting a stock response (either individually or as a school) to let the parent know why you're doing so

You're being harassed on social media, or somebody is spreading something offensive about you

- Do not retaliate or respond in anyway
- Save evidence of any abuse by taking screenshots and recording the time and date it occurred
- Report the material to Facebook or relevant social network and ask them to remove it
- If the perpetrator is a current school pupil or staff member, the school's own mediation and disciplinary procedures are usually sufficient to deal with online incidents

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- If the perpetrator is a parent or other external adult, a senior member of staff should invite them to a meeting to address their concerns, address any reasonable complaints and/or request they remove the offending comments or material

If the comments are racist, sexist, of a sexual nature or constitute a hate crime, you or someone from the school should consider contacting the police

To be reviewed January 2023