

Social Networking Policy



'We can and we will'

GLEBE PRIMARY SCHOOL

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Mission Statement

At Glebe School, we believe in an ethos that values the whole child. We strive to enable all children to achieve their full potential academically, socially and emotionally.

Introduction

The school is aware and acknowledges that increasing numbers of adults, and children, are using social networking sites. Some with the widest use are Instagram, Whatsapp, Facebook, TikTok and Twitter. 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 stakeholders 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 children, 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.

Aims

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.

Scope

This policy covers the use of social networking applications by all school stakeholders, including, employees, Governors, parents and pupils.

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The requirements of this policy apply to all uses of social networking applications, which are used for any school related purpose but also of personal accounts of stake holders in which there is a possibility in either safeguarding, malicious intent or bringing the school into disrepute.

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 or Instagram;
- Media sharing services, for example YouTube or TikTok;
- 'Micro-blogging' applications, for example Twitter;
- Social media where messages and images can be shared, such as Whatsapp.

All school stakeholders 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 Equal Opportunities Policy.

Legislation and Guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE) statutory safeguarding guidance, [Keeping Children Safe in Education](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>, and its advice for schools on:

- [Teaching online safety in schools](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teaching-online-safety-in-schools) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teaching-online-safety-in-schools>
- [Preventing and tackling bullying](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-and-tackling-bullying) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-and-tackling-bullying> and [cyber-bullying: advice for headteachers and school staff](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-and-tackling-bullying) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-and-tackling-bullying>
- [Relationships and sex education](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education>
- [Searching, screening and confiscation](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/searching-screening-and-confiscation) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/searching-screening-and-confiscation>

It also refers to the Department's guidance on [protecting children from radicalisation](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protecting-children-from-radicalisation-the-prevent-duty). <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protecting-children-from-radicalisation-the-prevent-duty>

It reflects existing legislation, including but not limited to the [Education Act 1996](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/contents) <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/contents> (as amended), the [Education and Inspections Act 2006](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/40/contents) <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/40/contents> and the [Equality Act 2010](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents). <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents> In addition, it reflects the [Education Act 2011](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/21/contents/enacted) <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/21/contents/enacted>, which has given teachers stronger powers to tackle cyber-bullying by, if necessary, searching for and deleting inappropriate images or files on pupils' electronic devices where they believe there is a 'good reason' to do so.

Age Restrictions

- **Facebook:** Facebook is targeted at older teenagers and adults. The age restriction is 13+. The following is an extract from Facebook's 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"*
- **Whatsapp:** In 2018, this changed from 13 to 16 years old due to the level of emotional maturity required to be able to freely send messages or images.

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- **Youtube:** Although to watch Youtube videos there is no age restriction, there is for having an account - which is 13.
- **TikTok:** The age restriction is 13. This is an extract directly copied from Tiktok's information for Parents; *"TikTok is intended for users age 13 and over. Please do not allow a child under the age of 13 to use the app."*
- **Snapchat, Twitter, Instagram, Musical.ly and Skype:** All have an age restriction of 13.

Please see UK Safer Internet Centre for information on all of these sites.

<https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/blog/age-restrictions-social-media-services#:~:text=Users%20will%20now%20need%20to,%2C%20Musical.ly%20and%20Skype.>

Use of Social Networking Sites During School Hours for Both Staff and Children

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

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 first approved by the Head teacher, or a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) in her absence.

Social Networking

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

School stakeholders 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. Glebe Primary 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 For Staff:

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 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;

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- 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.
- Staff should be aware that if their out-of-work activity causes potential embarrassment for the employer or detrimentally effects the employer's reputation then the employer is entitled to take disciplinary action as this may bring the school into disrepute;
- 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 head teacher in writing. However, it would not be appropriate to network during the working day on school 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 Designated safeguarding Lead (the Head teacher) or a member of the safeguarding Team in her absence.

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/protection for Pupils on Using Social Networking

- No pupil under 13 should be accessing social networking sites and children under 16 should not be using WhatsApp. There is a mechanism on Facebook where pupils can be reported via the Help screen; at the time of writing this policy the direct link for this is:
http://www.facebook.com/help/contact.php?show_form=underage
- No pupil may access social networking sites during the school working day;
- Only Year 6 are allowed to bring mobile phones into school and year 5 children who have been given written permission to walk home alone and live a fair distance from the school. They must be handed to their teacher at the beginning of the school day;
- 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 Head teacher. Parents will be informed if this happens;
- No school computers are to be used to access social networking sites at any time of day unless for direct school use (e.g watching a video on Youtube for a specific lesson);
- Any attempts to breach firewalls will result in a ban from using school ICT equipment other than with close supervision;
- At home, children should not be attempting to contact other children through social media past 9 pm at night;
- The school will take cyber bullying very seriously;
- Please report any improper contact or cyber bullying to the class teacher in confidence as soon as it happens and appropriate action can and will be taken.

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Terms of Use For Parents:

Parents should not attempt to 'friend' or 'follow' any member of staff on social media.

- "Think before you post". We ask that social media, whether public or private, should not be used to fuel campaigns and voice complaints against the school, school staff, parents nor children. We also ask that posts about other members of the community are carefully considered, before writing them, including on the Friends of Glebe's Facebook page;
- Sending abusive messages to another member of the school community, will not be tolerated. This includes via Classdojo, text, email, voicemail, or social media;
- Posting defamatory, offensive or derogatory comments about the school, its staff or any member of its community, on social media platforms will not be tolerated and appropriate action will be taken if and when necessary;
- Glebe Primary School has a clear complaints procedure, which can be accessed from our website and we ask that this is followed properly rather than posting comments online;
- Glebe Primary School retains the right to request any damaging material to be removed from social media websites;
- The Head teacher can request a meeting with parents if any misconduct, such as sending abusive messages or posting defamatory statuses, occurs online;
- The Head teacher can, with the permission of the parent, view messages sent between members of the parental body in order to deal with problems quickly and effectively;
- The Head teacher can request that 'group chats' are closed down should any problems continue between parents or parental bodies;
- More information can be found in our Parents' Code of Conduct, which can be found online or a copy can be requested from the office. Breaches of this code of conduct will be taken seriously by the academy and, in the event of illegal, defamatory, or discriminatory content, breaches could lead to prosecution.

Child Protection Guidance

If the head teacher receives a disclosure that an adult employed by the school is using a social networking site in an inappropriate manner as detailed above s/he should:

- Record the disclosure in line with our Child Protection and Safeguarding policy;
- Contact Schools HR to discuss the severity of the disclosure and investigate the claim;
- If the Safe Guarding systems have been breached, then the Head teacher must refer the matter to the LADO who will investigate via Hillingdon's County Council Police Child Protection Team;
- If the disclosure has come from a parent, take normal steps to reassure the parent and explain the school's processes;
- Maintain confidentiality, if a disclosure comes from a member of staff;
- 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.
- 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, Glebe Primary School protects themselves from accusations of complicity in any cyber bullying through the provision of access.

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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.

This can be a complex area, and these examples might help:

- **A child is receiving taunts on Facebook and text from an ex pupil who moved three months ago:** This is not a school responsibility, though the school might contact the new school to broker a resolution.
- **A child is receiving taunts from peers. It is all at weekends using text messages. The pupils are in the school:** The school has a duty of care to investigate and work with the families, as they attend the school.
- **A child is receiving taunts from peers. It is all at weekends using Facebook and WhatsApp. The pupils are in Y5:** This is the tricky one. The school has a duty of care to investigate and work with the families, as they attend the school. However, they are also fully within their rights to warn all the parents (including the victim) that they are condoning the use of Facebook and WhatsApp outside the terms and conditions of the site and that they are expected to ensure that use of the site stops. At any further referral to the school, the school could legitimately say that the victims and perpetrators had failed to follow the schools recommendation. They could then deal with residual bullying in the school, but refuse to deal with the social networking issues.

Once disclosure is made, investigation will have to involve the families. This should be dealt with under the school's adopted anti bullying policy.

If parent / carers refuse to engage and bullying continues, it can be referred to the police as harassment.

This guidance also applies to text and mobile phone cyber bullying.

If a parent/carers is making threats on-line against a member of school staff – this is counted as bullying and harassment. Full guidelines on this can be found in both our Bullying and Harassment Policy and Persistent and Vexatious Complaints Policy. However, The member of staff must inform the Head teacher immediately and the parent/carers spoken to. Should the situation not be resolved, the police and LA should be informed.

Other Useful Policies

This Policy should be read in conjunction with our:

- E- Safety Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy,
- Anti-Bullying Policing
- Bullying Harassment Policy
- Persistent and Vexatious Complaints Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Parents' Code of Conduct
- For staff only -Staff Code of Conduct

Reviewed: October 2022

To be reviewed: October 2024