



Social Media and Use of Mobile Phones and Digital Photography Policy

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Approval Level	Full Governing Body
Signed by	Nicola Waters, Chair of Governors
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Next Review	Autumn 2024

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 document gives clarity to the way in which social media/mobile phones are to be used by pupils, governors, visitors, parent helpers and school staff at Billingshurst Primary School. It will also provide guidance for parents.

There are five 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. Creation of network accounts by staff for use in education**
- D. Comments posted by parents/carers**
- E. 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.

In terms of private use of social networking sites by a child it is generally understood that children of primary school age are not permitted to be registered. In most cases the minimum age to register on these platforms is 13 (Tik Tok, Instagram and Snapchat) or 16 (WhatsApp). This is not an exhaustive list and ages are correct at the time the policy was reviewed and approved.

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 are issued to staff:

- Staff must never add pupils as friends into their personal accounts (including past pupils under the age of 16).
- Staff must not post picture of children whose parents have not given the appropriate permission for photographs.
- 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 must not post comments about the school, pupils, parents or colleagues including members of the Governing Body.

- 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. Creation of network accounts by staff for use in education.

All social media services must be approved by the Headteacher in advance of any educational work being undertaken.

Each year group Twitter account is managed by the year leader who takes responsibility for the content. The school Twitter account and Facebook account is managed by the Headteacher. Other accounts are attributed to the relevant leader. All accounts are monitored by the Headteacher

D. 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, such as the Home School Agreement, 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.
- Any abuse towards staff will be dealt with in line with the Parental Abuse policy

E. 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.

Page 5 of 'Behaviour and Discipline in Schools' indicates that the school can take action against incidents that happen outside school if it:

- Could have repercussions for the orderly running of the school or
- Poses a threat to another pupil or member of the public or
- Could adversely affect the reputation of the school.

Use of social networking sites to harass, bully or intimidate would be covered by this irrespective of when/where the post was made.

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. (Appendix 1)

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)

Use of Mobile Phones and Digital Photography Policy

Children are not allowed to have mobile phones in school.

Children have their photographs taken to provide evidence of their achievements for assessment purposes. These are taken with school equipment and kept on the school server. Any photos taken on staff's personal devices (school trips etc) must be downloaded at the earliest opportunity and then deleted from the device.

Children whose parents have declined permission for their photographs to be published in any form by the school, must not have their photos published. All teachers are responsible for knowing who these children are in their classes.

Staff, visitors, volunteers and students are not permitted to use their own mobile phones to take or record any images of school children during the school day without prior permission from the Headteacher.

Procedures

- Under the data protection act of 1998 school must seek parental consent to take photographs and use recorded images. Photographs will be stored on the school network which is password protected until the school ceases to operate, should this occur then all photographs will be shredded or deleted from the school network.
- The school's digital cameras must not leave the school setting (unless on an educational visit).
- Photographs are downloaded/printed in the setting by staff and images are then removed from the camera memory.
- Photographs of children may be taken and used in accordance with parental consent obtained via the Media Permission Form.
- Often photographs may contain other children in the background.
- Events such as Sports Day, outings, Christmas and fundraising events may be recorded by video and photographs by staff and parent/carers but always in full view of all attending.
- Parents must not post photographs or video containing other children on social media websites. (See Policy above).
- Many mobile phones have inbuilt cameras so staff mobile phones must not be used to take pictures of children in our school without prior permission of the headteacher.
- **Visitors may only use their phones in the foyer or outside the building and should be challenged if seen using a camera inappropriately or photographing children.**
- The use of cameras and mobile phones are prohibited in toilets.
- Staff are asked not to make personal calls during their working hours. However in urgent cases a call may be made or accepted if deemed necessary and by arrangement with the Headteacher.
- All school cameras and videos should be kept securely at all times and used with appropriate authority.

Appendices

Model Letter 1

Inappropriate Use of Social Networking Site

Dear Mr/Mrs.....

It has come to the attention of the Governing Body that inappropriate comments regarding the school/members of the school community have been made on a social networking site. As these comments do not comply with the expectations set out in the school's Social Networking Policy and Home School Agreement (enclosed), you are respectfully asked to remove them from the website.

We would encourage you to enter into productive communication with the school in order to resolve any outstanding differences. The school has an 'open door' policy with regard to dealing with parental communication and there are also policies in place such as the Complaints Policy if required.

Yours sincerely

Chair of Governing Body