

Garrett Hall Primary School

Social Networking policy



March 2022

Policy adopted:

7.3.2022

Policy to be reviewed:

6.3.2026

Signed on behalf of Governing Body:



Signed by the Headteacher



Introduction to the Policy

The school is aware and acknowledges that increasing numbers of adults and children are using social networking sites, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat.

The widespread availability and use of social networking applications bring opportunities to understand, engage and communicate with audiences in new ways. It is important that 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 reputation.

This policy and associated guidance is to protect 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.

Purpose

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

Many social networking sites are targeted at older teenagers and adults and some have a no under 13 registration policy and recommend parental guidance for 13 to 16 year olds. Some sites are open for everyone to use. We acknowledge that there are many primary age pupils active on a range of social networking sites.

This guidance is to advise and protect staff from accusations of improper relationships with pupils.

SCOPE

This policy covers the use of social networking applications, including micro-blogging platforms such as Twitter, by all school stakeholders, including, employees, Governors and pupils. These groups are referred to collectively as 'school representatives' for brevity.

The requirements of this policy apply to all uses of social networking applications which are used for any school related purpose and regardless of whether the School representatives are contributing in an official capacity to social networking applications provided by external organisations.

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
- Media sharing services, for example YouTube
- 'Micro-blogging' applications, for example Twitter

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's Equality and Diversity Policy.

Use of Social networking sites in work time

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 approved by the Head teacher first.

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 representatives must still operate in line with the requirements set out within the policy

School representatives 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. Garrett Hall 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

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 for the promotion of personal financial interests, commercial ventures or personal campaigns**
- **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**
- **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/carers**
- **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**

- Employees should not post any images taken in school, with or without pupils in the image
- Employees must have the highest security settings set on social media accounts
- References should not be made to any staff member, pupil, parent/carer or school activity / event unless prior permission has been obtained and agreed with the Head Teacher
- 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

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 staff on using social networking

- 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 Headteacher. However, it would not be appropriate to network during the working day on either school or personal 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 named Designated Safeguarding Lead in school.

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 networking 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/carers
- 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/carer adds you on social media

Do not accept this request. Bear in mind that:

- Responding to one parent's/carer'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/carer's account to anything you post, share, comment on or are tagged in

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

- **Do not retaliate or respond in any way**
- **Save evidence of any abuse by taking screenshots and recording the time and date it occurred**
- **Report the material to Facebook or the 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**
- **If the perpetrator is a parent/carer 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

Guidance/protection for Pupils on using social networking

- **No pupil under 13 should be accessing social networking sites. This is the guidance from both Facebook and MSN. There is a mechanism on Facebook where pupils can be reported via the Help screen**
- **Other than accessing the school blog under the supervision of a member of staff, no pupil may access social networking sites during the school working day**
- **Children are not permitted to use a mobile phone in school. Parents/carers may request that their child may bring a phone for safety reasons, but it must be switched off at all times during the school day and only used when off the school premises. Please refer to Mobile Phone Policy**
- **No school computers are to be used to access social networking sites at any time of day**

Any attempts to breach firewalls will result in a ban from using school ICT equipment other than with close supervision.

Please report any improper contact or cyber bullying to your class teacher in confidence as soon as it happens. We have a zero tolerance to cyber bullying.

Child protection guidance

If the Headteacher receives a disclosure that an adult employed by the school is using a social networking site in an inappropriate manner as detailed above he/she will:

- **Record the disclosure in line with their safeguarding policy. Schools must refer the matter to the LADO who will investigate**
- **If the disclosure has come from a parent/carer, take steps to reassure them and explain processes**
- **If disclosure comes from a member of staff, try to maintain confidentiality. 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 safeguarding policy until the police investigation has been carried out**

Cyber Bullying

By adopting the recommended no use of social networking sites on school premises, Garrett Hall Primary School protects themselves from accusations of complicity in any cyber bullying through the provision of access.

Facebook for School Staff: Rules and Privacy Settings

10 recommendations for teachers on Facebook

1. Change your display name – use your first and middle name, use a maiden name, or put your surname backwards instead
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 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/Local Authority 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 phone 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/carers 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** – 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
- **Google your name** to see what information about you is visible to the public. Facebook also has a setting that allows you to see what your profile looks like to other people, including specific friends and people searching for your name
- Prevent search engines from indexing your profile so that people can't **search for you by name**
- 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