Shipton Bellinger Primary School

Guide to appropriate use of social media

Whilst most of us are appreciative of and find very useful the communication technologies available in the 21st Century, there can also be a downside. If used inappropriately or irresponsibly (to make negative comments about individuals or an organisation or to post pictures without permission), we know that social media can cause unnecessary worry or hurt in communities and in schools amongst children, parents, teachers, staff and other prospective parents. At its worst, it can also damage an individual's / organisation's reputation and in some cases very sadly result in fatal outcomes.

The purpose of this document is to provide all those new to the school with a clear basic guide about the school's expectations in relation to behaviour when using social media.

In school, we teach children to be kind and show respect towards others in all that they do and say - offline and online. The expectation is that all adults (parents, staff and governors) will model this too. Posting unkind comments about others online is not condoned by the school or considered to be appropriate.

Whilst continually striving to make the school an even better school than it already is, we do teach children to be appreciative and thankful for all the wonderful things that we already have. It goes without saying that there is an expectation and hope that all adults will act responsibly when posting comments online, continuing to ensure that the school's maintains a positive reputation.

Honesty is an important quality. This means we teach children to be open and honest so that if things aren't right or they are unhappy about something, they say and do so directly with the other person concerned. Similarly, there is an expectation that if any adults in the school community are not happy about something or they have a concern, they say directly. Our School Complaints Policy provides clear guidance on how to raise any concerns about school issues. The Complaints policy at no stage includes or condones the use of Facebook, WhatsApp or other social media platforms as an appropriate forum for airing concerns.

When joining the school, all parents are asked about consent regarding use of images. We do permit individuals to film and take photos at key school and key stage events e.g. Nativity, but we do trust that photos will be used for personal use only and photos of children other than your own will not be posted online.

The above may sound obvious but research shows that 'social networkers', whatever their age, increasingly often don't think about what they are writing or posting in the same way they would think about what they write in a letter or an email. Therefore, a reminder to everyone, please think about the appropriateness and suitability of what is posted before posting!

As in public areas, the school is often fully aware of comments made on social networks. Unlike in the past, when individuals may have had a telephone conversation or a quick chat outside the village shop or at drop off, the reality is that once posted, what is written can often be seen by many who then in turn pass on comments in various forms, quickly!

If the school has any reason to believe that principles within this guide are not being followed, we will contact you directly to discuss it further.

However, thank you in advance for taking the time to read this guide and supporting the school in ensuring appropriate and responsible modelling and use of social media to children.