



"Working together to capture and nurture the imaginations of young minds."

Responsible for this policy	Tim Smith
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Social Networking Policy – Parents

Overview

Social networking site such as Facebook and Twitter are now widely used. This type of media allows people to communicate in ways that were not previously possible and can be used to positively enhance means of communication. Sharp Lane Primary School recognises that most stakeholders use this in a positive and responsible manner. However, for a minority of stakeholders, these sites are used as a way of expressing negative or offensive views about school and the staff instead of approaching school down the correct communication channels. When concerns are raised in the appropriate manner, the vast majority of concerns can be easily dealt with and resolved. This document sets out the school's approach to parental use of such sites and sets out the procedures that we will follow and action that we may take when we consider that parents have used such facilities inappropriately.

Objectives

The purpose of this policy is:

- To encourage social networking sites to be used in a beneficial and positive way by parents.
- Safeguard all school stakeholders from the negative effects of social networking sites and to safeguard the school's reputation from unwarranted abuse and harassment on social networking sites.
- Clarify what the school considers to be appropriate and inappropriate use of social networking by parents.
- Set out the procedures that school will follow where it considers parents have inappropriately or unlawfully used social networking sites to the detriment of the school, its staff or its pupils, and anyone else associated with Sharp Lane Primary School.
- Set out the action(s) that the school will consider taking if stakeholders make inappropriate use of social networking sites.

Appropriate use of social networking sites by parents

Social networking sites have potential to enhance the learning and achievement of pupils and enable parents to access information about school, whilst providing feedback efficiently and easily. School recognises that stakeholders will have personal accounts on social networking sites and, as such, may use these as a way of discussing/sharing views about school issues

with friends and acquaintances. We appreciate that, at times, these views may not be positive but would ask individuals to consider the following prior to posting any information on social networking sites about school, its staff, its pupils or anyone else associated with it:

- Is the social networking site the most appropriate channel to raise concerns, give this piece of feedback or express these views?
- Would private and confidential discussions with school be more appropriate? E.g. if there are allegations being made /concerns being raised. Social media/internet sites should not be used to name individuals and/or make abusive comments about those people. Please contact school via the relevant channels to discuss these concerns.
- Are such comments likely to cause emotional or reputational harm to individuals which would not be justified, particularly if school had not yet had chance to investigate a complaint?
- Moreover, social media should not be used by any individual awaiting response to a complaint as a means of 'speeding up' the investigation. Allegations are taken seriously by Sharp Lane and will be investigated thoroughly and outcomes reported appropriately once complete.
- The reputational impact that the posting of such material may have to school; any detrimental harm that the school may suffer as a result of the posting; and the impact that such a posting may have on pupils' learning.

Inappropriate use of social networking sites by parents

Although social networking sites may appear to be the easiest and quickest way to express frustration or concerns about school (and those associated with it), it is never appropriate to do so.

Where a parent or individual has a concern, this must be made through clear through the appropriate channels by speaking to the class teacher, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors so they can be dealt with fairly, appropriately and effectively for all concerned. More information about these channels of complaint can be found in the Complaints Policy.

The school considers the following examples to be inappropriate uses of social networking sites. (This list is non-exhaustive and intended to provide examples only):

- Making allegations about staff or pupils at school and/or cyber-bullying
- Making complaints about the school or staff at Sharp Lane Primary School
- Making defamatory statements about Sharp Lane Primary School, its practises, procedures and/or policies
- Posting negative/offensive comments about specific pupils/staff at Sharp Lane Primary School
- Positing racist or homophobic comments
- Positing comments which threaten violence.

It is the responsibility of parents to ensure that their child(ren) are using social media sites appropriately. It is expected that parents/carers explain to their children what is acceptable to post online. Parents/carers are advised to monitor their children's online activity, including in relation to their use of social media.

Procedure the school will follow if inappropriate use continues:

In the event that any pupil or individual associated with a child/ren at Sharp Lane Primary School is found to be positing libellous or defamatory comments on Facebook or other social networking sites, they will be reported to the appropriate 'report abuse' section of the network site. All social network sites have clear rules about the content which can be posted on the site and they provide robust mechanisms to report contact or activity which breaches their rules and regulations. The school expects that parents/carers remove comments that fall short of agreed standards and that they attend a meeting via telephone or in person to discuss the repercussion of these actions.

If a parent or individual associated with a child at Sharp Lane refuses to comply with these procedures and continues to use social media in a manner that the school considers inappropriate, the school will consider taking legal action:

- Taking legal advice and/or legal action where the information is defamatory in any way or if the circumstances warrant this;
- Set out the school's concerns to you in writing, giving you a warning and requesting that the material in question is removed;
- Contact the police where the schools feels that it is appropriate – for example, if it considers a crime (such as harassment) have been committed; or in cases where the posting has a racial element, is considered to be grossly obscene or is threatening violence;
- If the inappropriate comments have been made on a school forum, the school may take action to block or restrict that individuals access to that website or forum, without consultation if deemed necessary;
- Contact the host/provider of the social networking site to complain about the content of the site and ask for removal of the information
- Take legal action against the individual.



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Social Networking Policy – Staff

Overview

*In the context of this policy "everyone" refers to members of staff, friends and anyone working in a voluntary capacity at Sharp Lane Primary School.

Introduction

Social networking activities conducted online outside work, such as blogging (writing personal journals to publicly accessible internet pages), involvement in social networking sites such as Facebook and posting material, images or comments on sites such as You Tube can have a negative effect on an organisation's reputation or image. In addition, Sharp Lane Primary School has a firm commitment to safeguarding children in all aspects of its work.

This policy has been written to set out the key principles and code of conduct that we expect of all members of staff with respect to their responsibilities in connection with the use of social networking sites.

Key Principles

- Everyone at Sharp Lane Primary School has a responsibility to ensure that they protect the reputation of school and to treat all colleagues with professionalism and respect
- It is important to protect everyone at Sharp Lane from allegations and misinterpretations which can arise from the use of social networking sites.
- Safeguarding children is a key responsibility of all members of staff and it is essential that everyone at Sharp Lane Primary School considers this and acts responsibly if they are using social networking sites outside of school. Anyone working in the school either as a paid employee or volunteer must not communicate with pupils and ex-pupils via social networking and must not accept or initiate Facebook or any other social networking friend requests from pupils and ex-pupils enrolled at Sharp Lane.
- This policy relates to social networking outside work. Accessing social networking sites at work using school equipment is not permitted unless it is being used by designated staff for school publicity or promotion.

Objectives

- To set out the key principles and code of conduct expected of all members of staff, trustees, friends and volunteers at Sharp Lane in respect to social networking.
- To further safeguard and protect children and staff.

Code of Conduct for Social Networking

The following are not considered acceptable at Sharp Lane Primary School:

- The use of the school's name, logo, or any other published material without prior permission from the Headteacher. This applies to any published material including the internet or written documentation.
- The posting of any communication or images which links the school to any form of illegal conduct or which may damage its reputation. This includes defamatory comments.
- The disclosure of confidential or business-sensitive information; or the disclosure of information or images that could compromise the security of the school.
- The posting of any images of employees, children or anyone directly connected with the school whilst engaged in school activities except by a designated person for agreed publicity use.

In addition to the above everyone at Sharp Lane must ensure that they:

- Do not make any derogatory, defamatory, rude, threatening or inappropriate comments about the school, or anyone at or connected with the school.
- Use social networking sites responsibly and ensure that neither their personal/professional reputation, or the school's reputation is compromised by inappropriate postings.
- Are aware of the potential of on-line identity fraud and to be cautious when giving out personal information about themselves which may compromise their personal safety and security.
- Communication between pupils and adults should take place within clear and explicit professional boundaries.
- Should not share any personal information with a child or young person.
- All communications are transparent and open to scrutiny.
- Personal contact details including email, home or mobile numbers should not be given unless the need to do so is agreed by the Headteacher.
- Ensure that personal social networking sites are set to Private and pupils are never listed as approved contacts.
- Never use or access social networking sites of pupils.
- Not give their personal contact details to pupils, including their mobile telephone number.
- Not use internal or web based communication other than Google Classroom to send messages to a child/young person. This communication should be in response to submitted work during a home-schooling period.
- It is strongly recommended that Facebook friend requests not be initiated or accepted from parents.

Potential and Actual Breaches of the Code of Conduct

In instances where there has been a breach of the above Code of Conduct, the following will apply:

- Any breaches of this policy will be fully investigated. Where it is found that there has been a breach of the policy this may result in action being taken under the Disciplinary Procedure. A breach of this policy will be considered to be a serious disciplinary offence which is also contrary to the school's ethos and principles.