



Social Networking Policy

Ratified by the Governing Body on: 12th November 2014

Original Review Date: 12th November 2016

Updated: 1st September 2017

Review Date: September 2020

Introduction

- 1.1 The internet provides a range of social media tools that allow users to interact with one another, for example from rediscovering friends on social networking sites such as Facebook, to keeping up with other people's lives on Twitter and maintaining pages on internet encyclopaedias such as Wikipedia.
- 1.2 Whilst the widespread availability and use of social networking applications brings opportunities to engage and communicate with audiences in new and exciting ways, it is important to ensure that we balance this not only with our legal responsibilities to safeguard and protect our children and staff but also with the need to safeguard the school's image and reputation.
- 1.3 The school E Safety Policy, which includes a wider range of information on home and school ICT use, should be read alongside this policy.

2.0 Purpose

- 2.1 The purpose of this policy is to:
 - Support safer working practice by setting out the key principles and expected standards of behaviour when using social networking media.

- Ensure all children are safeguarded.
- Ensure the reputation of the school (its staff, pupils and governors at the school) are not damaged or compromised.
- Ensure that any users are able to clearly distinguish where information provided via social networking applications is legitimately representative of the School.
- Minimise the risk of misplaced or malicious allegations being made against those who work with pupils.
- Reduce the incidence of positions of trust being abused or misused.
- Ensure the school, its governors and staff, are not exposed to legal risks.

3.0 Scope

- 3.1 This policy applies to the governing body, all teaching and other staff, whether employed by Brighton & Hove City Council or employed directly by the school, individual governors, external contractors providing services on behalf of the school or the City Council, teacher trainees and other trainees, supply staff, agency workers, volunteers and other individuals who work for, or provide services on behalf of, the school. These individuals are collectively referred to as 'staff members' in this policy.
- 3.2 This policy cannot cover all eventualities and, therefore, staff members should consult the Headteacher if they are in any way unsure about what is and isn't acceptable use of social media.

4.0 Legal Framework

- 4.1 West Blatchington Primary School is committed to ensuring that all staff members provide confidential services that meet the highest standards. All individuals working on behalf of the school are bound by a legal duty of confidence and other laws to protect the confidential information they have access to during the course of their work. Disclosure of confidential information on social media is likely to be a breach of the law and professional codes of conduct.
- 4.2 Confidential information includes, but is not limited to:
- Person-identifiable information, e.g. pupil and employee records protected by the Data Protection Act 1998.
 - Information divulged in the expectation of confidentiality.
 - School or Brighton & Hove City Council business or corporate records containing organisationally or publicly sensitive information.
 - Any commercially sensitive information such as information relating to commercial proposals or current negotiations.
 - Politically sensitive information

- Staff members should also be aware that other laws relating to libel, defamation, harassment and copyright may apply to information posted on social media.

4.3 West Blatchington Primary School and Brighton & Hove City Council could be held vicariously responsible for acts of their employees in the course of their employment. For example, staff members who harass co-workers online or who engage in cyber-bullying or discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, disability, etc or who defame a third party while at work may render the school or the Council liable to the injured party.

5.0 Definition of Social Media

5.1 Social media is the term commonly used for websites which allow people to interact with each other in some way by sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interests. Social networking websites such as Facebook, Bebo and MySpace are perhaps the most well known examples of social media but the term also covers other web based services such as blogs, mirco-blogs such as Twitter, chat rooms, forums, video and audio podcasts, open access online encyclopaedias such as Wikipedia, message boards, photo document, social bookmarking sites such as del.icio.us and content sharing sites such as flickr and YouTube.

5.2 This definition of social media is not exhaustive. The internet is a fast moving technology and it is impossible to cover all circumstances or emerging media. However, the principles set out in this policy must be followed irrespective of the medium.

5.3 For the purpose of this policy, the term social media also applies to the use of communication technologies such as mobile phones, cameras, PDAs / PSPs or other handheld devices and any other emerging forms of communications technologies.

6.0 Principles - Social Media Practice

6.1 Staff members need to be aware that when using social media, whether in a personal or professional context, everything they post online is public, even with the strictest privacy settings. Once something is online, it can be copied and redistributed and it is easy to lose control of it. They should therefore assume that everything they post online will be permanent and will be shared.

6.2 Staff members must be conscious at all times of the need to keep their personal and professional lives separate and to always maintain appropriate professional boundaries.

6.3 Staff members are responsible for their own actions and conduct, therefore they should avoid behaviour which might be misinterpreted by others, or which could put them in a position where there is a conflict between their work for the school or Brighton & Hove City Council and their personal interests.

- 6.4 They must use social media in a professional, responsible and respectful way and must comply with the law (including equalities legislation) in their on-line communications.
- 6.5 Staff members must not engage in activities involving social media which might bring the school or the Council into disrepute.
- 6.6 They must not represent their personal views as those of the school or the Council on any social medium.
- 6.7 They must not discuss personal information about pupils, their family members, school or Council staff or any other professionals or organisations they interact with as part of their job on social media.
- 6.8 They must not name or otherwise identify pupils, former pupils or their parents, family members, colleagues etc in social media conversations.
- 6.9 They must not use social media or the internet in any way to attack, insult, abuse, defame or otherwise make negative, offensive or discriminatory comments about pupils, their family members, colleagues, other professionals, other organisations, the school or the Council.
- 6.10 They must not browse, download, upload or distribute any material that could be considered inappropriate, offensive, defamatory, illegal or discriminatory.
- 6.11 They must at all times act in the best interests of children and young people when creating, participating in or contributing content to social media sites.

7.0 Use of Social Media by the School

- 7.1 Social media can be used to communicate news and information by the school, through sites such as Twitter.
- 7.2 In order for any additional School social media accounts to be set up, a project brief must be written and submitted for approval by the Head Teacher and Governing body. The brief must outline how the service would benefit the School, the proposed social networking site, details of who would be responsible for the communications, along with details of how the service would be maintained and monitored.
- 7.3 The School will share it's Social Networking Policy with any groups formally associated with the School e.g. Friends of West Blatchington, to support the safeguarding of pupils and protect the image and reputation of the School.

8.0 Guidelines for Those Authorised to Use School Social Media Sites

- 8.1 Those staff members who are authorised to use a social media tool on behalf of the school, must first ensure they receive the appropriate training from Brighton & Hove City Council's Communications Team.
- 8.2 Those authorised to use social media on behalf of the School have a responsibility to use it in a professional and responsible manner. In general terms, this means complying with the requirements set out in this policy and the School's E-Safety Policy.
- 8.3 Staff members need to be aware that when using social media on behalf of the School, they are acting as ambassadors for West Blatchington Primary School. What they say and post online will directly impact not only their personal reputation but also the reputation and image of the School. Therefore, they should ensure that they:
- Identify themselves and their role within the School.
 - Ensure any comments are neutral in tone, clear and factual at all times.
 - Do not undermine the impartiality or integrity of West Blatchington Primary School in anything they write.
 - Do not express personal views and/or advocate a particular position on a subject.
 - Correct personal mistakes promptly and do not alter previous posts without indicating they have done so.
 - Do not provoke negative discussions.
 - Respect the views expressed by their audience and only remove negative or aggressive comments as a last resort.
 - Ask and secure express permission before publishing any documents and/or reporting on social media any conversations that are meant to be private, confidential or internal to the School or Brighton & Hove City Council.
 - Don't cite or make references to colleagues, pupils, or other third parties or post photographs without their express consent.
- 8.4 Staff members need to be aware that the information they post on social media websites and associated documents can be subject to Freedom of Information requests.
- 8.5 Failure to comply with the above may result in the social media site being removed and disciplinary action being taken against those involved.

9.0 Guidelines on the Personal Use of Social Media

9.1 General

As the use and popularity of social media grows, the line between what is public and private, personal and professional can become increasingly blurred.

It is therefore important that staff members are aware that their actions on their

personal web space could have an adverse impact on their professional role and/or on the School's image and reputation.

In the event that a staff member's online activities impacted on the School, this would no longer be a private and personal matter, but would become a matter of concern to the School. This would lead to the matter being investigated in accordance with the School's disciplinary procedure and could result in disciplinary action against the individual concerned.

Staff members must not state that they work at West Blatchington Primary & Nursery School on any personal social networking site or online profile.

Appendix 1 sets out the guidelines that staff members should follow in order to avoid any potential conflict between their personal use of social media and their role within the School.

9.2 Personal Use of Social Media at Work

Personal use of social media sites is permitted at work but must be within the individual's own time and away from sight of pupils, e.g. at lunchtime in the staff room. Any use must not adversely affect School priorities or network performance.

Staff members must not use the school wifi for any personal mobile devices or smart watches.

Staff members must not edit any open access online encyclopaedias such as Wikipedia in a personal capacity at work. This is because the source of the correction will be recorded as the School's IP address and the intervention will, therefore, appear as if it comes from the School itself.

10.0 Breaches of the Policy

- 10.1 The School reserves the right to close any School social media applications or remove any inappropriate content published by staff members which may adversely affect the reputation of the School or put it at risk of legal action.
- 10.2 Any breach of this policy may lead to disciplinary action, including the possibility of dismissal, being taken against the staff member/s involved in line with West Blatchington Primary School's Disciplinary Procedure.
- 10.3 Contracted service providers of West Blatchington Primary must inform the Head Teacher immediately of any breaches of this Policy, so that appropriate action can be taken to protect confidential information and limit the damage to the reputation of the school and the Council. Any action against breaches should be according to contractors' internal disciplinary procedures.

10.4 In the event of a serious breach of the School's Social Networking Policy amounting to a breach of the law, the School will be obliged to report this to the Police or other external agency as appropriate.

11.0 Links to other Policies/Standards

11.1 This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies and standards:

- E-Safety Policy
- ICT Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- West Blatchington Primary School Core Expectations
- Teacher's Standards 2012

<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/teachers%20standards.pdfA>

Appendix A

Guidelines for staff members when using their own personal social media

- 1.0 Staff members need to be aware of the dangers of putting personal information such as addresses, home/mobile phone numbers and email addresses onto social networking sites.
- 2.0 Staff members should ensure that they set the privacy levels of their personal sites at the maximum and opt out of public listings on social networking sites to protect their privacy.
- 3.0 Staff members should keep their passwords confidential, change them often and be careful about what is posted online. It is a good idea to use a separate email address just for social networking so that any other contact details are not disclosed.
- 4.0 Staff members should not identify themselves as employees of the school or Brighton & Hove City Council or service providers for the school or the City Council in their personal web space. This is to prevent information on these sites being linked with the School or the Council. Where possible it may be useful to add a disclaimer such as “these are my own views and opinions and not those of my employer”.
- 5.0 Taking the steps outlined above, will avoid the potential for staff members to be contacted by pupils or their families or friends outside of the school environment and will reduce the chances of them becoming victims of identity theft.
- 6.0 All staff members should try to regularly review their social networking sites to ensure that information available publicly about them is accurate and appropriate. This should be suggested to new staff when they join the school. It is also good practice to close old accounts as they may contain personal information about you.
- 7.0 Staff members must not give their personal contact details including details of any blogs or personal social media sites or other websites to pupils or former pupils. It is also important to be aware that ex pupils may still have siblings in the school.
- 8.0 Staff members must not have contact through any personal social medium with any pupil, whether from this or any other school, unless the pupil is a family member or it is through school approved sites as part of official collaborative work.
- 9.0 The school does not expect staff members to discontinue contact with their family members via personal social media once the school starts providing services for them. However, any information staff members obtain in the course of their employment must not be used for personal gain nor be passed on to others who may use it in such a way.
- 10.0 It is strongly recommended that staff members do not have any contact with pupils’ family members through personal social media.

- 11.0 If staff members wish to communicate with pupils through social media sites or to enable pupils to keep in touch with one another, they can only do so with the approval of the School and through official school sites.
- 12.0 Staff members must not establish, or seek to establish, social contact via social media/other communication technologies with pupils or ex-pupils and must never “friend” a pupil or ex-pupil through social media. These actions could be construed as being part of a “grooming process” in the context of sexual offending. In the case of some social networking sites it is possible to be ‘followed’ by a pupil without your consent. If this is the case, then your school should be informed and the pupil ‘follower’ deleted.
- 13.0 Staff members must never use or access pupils’ social networking sites.
- 14.0 Staff members must decline ‘friend requests’ from pupils they receive in their personal social media accounts. If they receive such requests from pupils who are not family members, they must discuss these in general terms in class.
- 15.0 Confidentiality needs to be considered at all times. Social networking sites have the potential to discuss or publish inappropriate information. Staff members must therefore make sure that they do not publish confidential information that they have access to as part of their employment on their personal webspace. This includes personal information about pupils, their family members, colleagues, Brighton & Hove City Council staff and other parties as well as School or Council related information. This requirement continues after they have left employment.
- 16.0 Similarly, photographs, videos or any other types of image of pupils and their families or images depicting staff members wearing school or Council uniforms or clothing with school or Council logos or images identifying sensitive school or Council premises (e.g. care homes, secure units) must not be published on personal webspace.
- 17.0 The School or Council’s corporate, service or team logos or brands must also not be used or published on personal webspace.
- 18.0 Staff members must not use school or Council email addresses and other official contact details for setting up personal social media accounts or for communicating through such media.
- 19.0 Staff members must not edit open access online encyclopaedias such as Wikipedia in a personal capacity at work. This is because the source of the correction will be recorded as the employer’s IP address and the intervention will, therefore, appear as if it comes from the employer itself.
- 20.0 Staff members are advised to be cautious about inviting work colleagues to be ‘friends’ in personal social networking sites. Social networking sites blur the line between work and

personal lives and this may make it difficult to maintain professional relationships or embarrassing, if too much personal information is known in the work place.

- 21.0 On leaving West Blatchington Primary School's service, staff members must not contact the School's pupils by means of personal social media sites. Similarly, staff members must not contact pupils from their former schools by means of personal social media.
- 21.1 This policy will reviewed, together with the ICT Acceptable Use Policy and E-Safety Policy every two years.

Appendix 1 – Copy of the Staff ICT Policies Agreement Form



Staff ICT Policies Agreement

Covering ICT Acceptable Usage Policy, E-Safety Policy and Social Networking Policy

E-Safety Policy & Social Networking Policy

Summary of Key Guidelines:

- The school owns the computer network and can set rules for its use.
- It is an offence to use a computer or network for a purpose not permitted by the school.
- Network access **must** be made via the user's authorised account and password, which must not be given to any other person (i.e. colleagues or supply teachers)
- You **must** remember to log off your computer and email account to ensure child protection whenever you are not at your PC.
- All network and internet use **must** be appropriate to education within school working hours.
- Copyright **must** be respected (images used must be copyright free).
- Messages shall be written carefully and politely particularly as emails could be forwarded to unintended readers.
- Anonymous messages and chain letters are **not** permitted.
- Do **not** browse, download, upload or distribute any material that could be considered offensive, illegal or discriminatory.
- Use of websites for personal financial gain, gambling, political activity, advertising or illegal purposes is **not** permitted (however, viewing a trade union site is permitted).
- Staff must not use the school wifi for their own mobile devices including smart watches.
- **Do not** give out your own personal details, such as mobile phone number, personal e-mail address or social network details to pupils, parents or carers. Always provide outside agencies with the school contact details and your school email address.
- The use of mobile phones is **not** permitted in the presence of children. Photographs and videos of children **must not** be taken on mobile phones (see Safeguarding Policy).
- School mobile phones should be used during residential trips and day visits. Personal mobile phones should **not** be used to contact parents. There is a school mobile phone on each site.
- Personal cameras (including those on mobile devices) **must not** be used in school or during out of school hours events. Always use school cameras for photographing children and **do not** store photographs on your school laptop or memory sticks.
- After school trips and off site events, all pupil information (including parent contact information) must be shredded after the trip.
- Ensure that your online activity, **both in school and outside school**, will not bring your organisation or professional role into disrepute.
- Do **not** state that you work at West Blatchington Primary & Nursery School on any personal social media site or online profile, to ensure that any personal opinions do not reflect upon or link to the school.

You have a duty to report any E-Safety incident which may impact on you, your professionalism or your organisation.

The use of social networking sites is permitted **but** staff are reminded to use them in a **professional manner** and according to the guidance set out in the ICT Acceptable Usage Policy, E-Safety Policy and Social Networking Policy.

I hereby agree to the above rules. I also confirm that I have read and will adhere to both the E-Safety & Social Networking Policies and that it is my responsibility to keep up to date with the school's most recent policies.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

ICT Acceptable Use & Information Security Policy

I have read and understood West Blatchington Primary & Nursery School's ICT Acceptable Use & Information Security Policy and agree to abide by all the points above in this document and its guidelines and recommendations during my time of employment at West Blatchington Primary & Nursery School.

I understand that all school information that I have access to during my employment remains the property of the school following the termination of my employment at the school. I agree not to divulge any information inappropriately according to this policy following the termination of my employment at the school.

I understand that it is my responsibility to ensure that I remain up to date and read and understand the school's most recent policies.

I understand that failure to comply with this agreement could lead to disciplinary action.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Print Full Name: _____

Job Role: _____