

## Social Media Policy

Social media and social networking sites play an important role in the lives of many people. We recognise that the use of apps and sites bring risks, but equally there are many benefits to be reaped. This policy 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 Oldfield Primary School. It will also provide guidance for parents/carers around these matters.

There are four key areas:

**A. Use of social networking by staff in a personal capacity**

**B. Comments posted by parents/carers**

**C. Dealing with incidents of online bullying**

**D. Dealing with Incidents of online bullying/inappropriate use of social networking sites**

**A. The use of social networking sites by pupils within school**

The school's Internet Policy 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. Children do not have any access to any social media sites at school.

In terms of private use of social networking sites by a child it is generally understood that children under the age of 13 are not permitted to be registered, including Facebook and Instagram to name two. The legal minimum age for the use of What's App is 16 years old.

**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 are **strongly advised** not to add parents/carers as 'friends' into their personal accounts.
- Staff **must not** post comments about the school, pupils, parents/carers or colleagues including members of the Governing Body.
- Staff **must not** post information or opinions about Oldfield Primary School or pictures of school events.
- 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 should read and comply with 'Guidance for Safer Working Practice for Adults who Work with Children and Young People' and 'Keeping Children Safe in Education Part 1 September 2024' and any subsequent years.

- Inappropriate use by staff should be referred to the Headteacher in the first instance and may lead to disciplinary action.

### **C. 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 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/carers 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. The school cannot police these sites, and if other children are included in any photographs, you may be asked to remove them as other parents may object.
- Parents/carers should make complaints through official school channels rather than posting them on social networking sites.
- Parents/carers should not post malicious or fictitious comments on social networking sites including What's App, about any member of the school community. This includes posts under a pseudonym or posts made anonymously.

### **D. Dealing with incidents of online bullying/inappropriate use of social networking sites**

The school's Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policy sets out the processes and sanctions regarding any type of bullying by a child on the school roll.

In the case of inappropriate use of social networking by parents/carers, the Headteacher will contact the parent/carer asking them to remove such comments and seek redress through the appropriate channels such as the Complaints Policy and a letter will be sent. (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 on their person in school. If children bring a phone to school, they must take it to the school office where it will be kept until the end of the school day.

Children have their photographs taken to provide evidence of their learning and development records and the school's assessment process and classroom displays only. Photographs may also be taken at sporting events by the teacher attending and if permission is given these may be published both inside and outside of school to celebrate their achievements.

**Staff, visitors, volunteers and students are not permitted to use their own mobile phones to take or record any images of school children for their own records during the school day.**

### Procedures

- Under the Data Protection Act of 1998 school must seek parental consent to take photographs and use video recorders. 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 or I Pads must not leave the school setting (unless on an educational visit).
- Photographs are printed in the setting by staff and images are then removed from the camera memory or added to the school network.
- Photographs of children may be taken and used in accordance with parental consent obtained via the RBWM Standard Photography, Video and Voice Consent 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/carers 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. Staff **may** only use their mobile phones for taking pictures at sporting events/trips only with the 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. Parents/carers need to use common sense when recording children at sporting events and could be challenged by parents who do not wish their children to be filmed. Parents/carers must also use common sense regarding posting pictures of children on their own social media. (Please see Policy above)**
- 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.

## Appendix 1

## Inappropriate Use of Social Networking Sites

Dear .....

It has come to the attention of the Headteacher and 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 Media Policy 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