

Crofton Junior School



Social Media Policy

December 2017

Aims and Objectives |

To ensure that the use of social networking:

Does not bring the school into disrepute

Does not bring the members of staff into disrepute

Does not expose the school to legal liability

Reflects 'safer Internet' practices

Minimises risks associated with the personal use of social media by professionals

Reflects the school's standard of behaviour and staff code of conduct

Social Media:

Social media can be defined as any networking or collaborative website or application which facilitates public interactions between two or more linked people.

Underlying principles:

Information, messages and media (including photos and movies) is never completely private on social media websites, regardless of the application of privacy settings. Information, messages and media placed on social media sites can be extremely difficult, and sometimes impossible, to completely delete, and equally difficult to track dissemination and the scale of the audience.

School staff using social media responsibly will ensure:

They avoid any actions which might cause others to negatively question their motives and intentions

They use social media transparently and keep complete records of all interactions

They keep up to date with current DfE, LA, Academy Trust and regulatory guidance.

Promoting safe use of the Internet:

School staff will use social media and the Internet in line with teaching in PSHE, Computing and other subjects with regard to "safer use of the Internet".

If using social media for personal use, or for professional use, staff will use the "profile" information or "about" section to clearly define the purpose of the account, and whose views are being expressed.

Privacy:

School staff will be careful with regard to publishing private and personal information, such as email addresses, phone numbers, mobile phone numbers and home addresses, if there is any concern that such information might be misused or abused should it fall into the public domain and be seen by pupils or parents.

Staff will ensure information about them placed on social networking sites is accurate. For example, any information regarding employment and qualifications will need to match that provided to employers – discrepancies might result in misconduct proceedings.

Photographs and profile images needs to be appropriate and not contentious – these images are the most likely to end up being copied by search engines such as Google and appear in the public domain.

Staff need to ensure that social networking accounts are not used within "directed time".

Staff will not use school equipment and the IT network to access their social media accounts. If they wish to check their social media profiles on their own personal device, they would do this during 'non directed' time and in an area where pupils are not allowed e.g. workroom, staffroom.

For the same reasons, all staff need to ensure that passwords to social networking sites remain private, and are not used by pupils.

Guidelines regarding communicating with pupils or parents on personal accounts:

Staff will avoid 'friending' (ie initiating contact with) current pupils or parents on their social networking sites.

Staff should be aware that if a pupil attempts to "friend" a member of staff on Facebook and other social networking sites, depending on the staff's privacy settings, this attempt to "friend" might result in more of the profile being visible to the pupil, until the staff "rejects" the "friend request". Staff need to be aware that many pupils will be savvy to this exploitation of Facebook's "friend" procedure to try and access more of the staff's photos and comments.

Currently, the only method to avoid this Facebook pitfall is to ensure all privacy settings are set to "friends only". However, there are other settings which need to be tweaked to ensure maximum privacy.

Similarly, staff would think carefully about whether to accept friend requests from former students, in case these students are themselves friends with current pupils who might therefore be able to access the staff's profile.

Content on a member of staff's social networking profile:

Staff need to ensure that comments and images do not bring the school or the teaching profession into disrepute.

Staff need to ensure that content on social media profiles does not breach a school, LA, Academy Trust or regulatory body code of conduct with regard to the professionalism of staff and acceptable conduct.

Staff need to maintain appropriate confidentiality with regard to school matters, pupil matters and data protection. This includes keeping pupil matters off personal profiles, not using photographs of pupils for which permission has not been granted, and not referring to private data, for example pupils' exam results or initial OFSTED gradings for the school.

Staff need to be aware that negative and critical comments regarding other colleagues, pupils, parents or the school might be construed to be defamatory. The potential audience of social media might result in "substantial publication" a pre requisite to libel and defamation action being taken against staff. Even if the comments could be regarded as "fair comment", or true, the nature and method of making the comment via social media could well be considered misconduct. Grievances are best dealt with via union reps or employment law solicitors, not Facebook or Twitter.

Under the PREVENT duty for schools, staff should be aware of the importance of promoting British Values. Many groups with radical and extreme views post information onto social media and staff would avoid 'following' or 'liking' these groups. Staff have to be careful as many right wing groups use iconic imagery which seems harmless when they are first uploaded, however 'liking' specific posts could result in staff having other racist posts on their timeline. It is important to be cautious of information you support and share on social media.

If staff do want to refer to events relating to their school, in a positive light, for example a successful school event, it is best to do so by "sharing" or "linking to" a 3rd party news report which is already in the public domain. For example, if staff want to comment on what a great day the school's charity event was it would be best to share a newspaper's online story about the event. This article, and any associated pictures, would be in the public domain, permissions will have been granted by the school for use of images, and the staff member will not be breaking any school policies, guidelines relating to images, or data protection legislation.

Exceptions:

There are some exceptions to the above advice to avoid "friending pupils" on Facebook.

For example: The pupil might be a member of the family, or the child of a close friend, or a godchild. In such cases, it is still worth maintaining transparency by also friending the pupil's parents, and still consider limiting the privacy settings to control the content visible to the pupil. It is also better practice to respond to friend requests by the pupil rather than initiate, ie for the member of staff to "friend." Many social networks offer the ability to share information with specific groups e.g. close family, university friends etc and staff may want to consider refining posts to certain groups.

Uninitiated contact:

It must be remembered that uninitiated contact, or "friending" does not constitute an interaction by the member of staff – only a response does. This is worth considering since some forms of social media do not involve an interaction between a pupil and member of staff even if a pupil "friends" them or vice versa.

For example: a pupil might follow a teacher on Twitter. On Twitter interactions are only possible via direct messages (DMs) or @replies – therefore friending does not constitute interaction. Similarly, a teacher might choose to "follow back" a pupil, or it might be that the teacher's account is set to automatically "follow back" anyone who "follows" them. Also, in this case there is no actual interaction between the teacher and pupil.

Similarly, on blog platforms, anyone can “follow” a blog without any interaction actually occurring.

Staff also need to bear in mind that many social media platforms – for example Facebook – have built in child protection systems. According to Facebook’s European Trust and Safety Lead, on Facebook, these are activated when a child under 16 is contacted by someone, as a friend request, message or like, who does not have any friends in common or any relationship to the child which Facebook’s systems can detect. Facebook then routinely logs and monitors all activity – including all messages – on the adult’s account for an unspecified period.

Acceptable Use and Cyber bullying:

This policy will establish acceptable use and a code of conduct regarding use of ICT and Internet facilities within school. It may also take into account external use of ICT and the Internet where it impinges on pupils, staff and the reputation of the school. For example, an AUP might feature guidance and rules regarding cyber bullying using social networks such as Facebook.

The rules of each social media website, the “Terms of Service” also need to be considered.

For example, pupils under 13 should not have social media – to do so would contravene the “Terms of Service” of any social media website (except those specifically designed for younger pupils). Other social media sites also have other age settings:

<https://www.net-aware.org.uk/#>

Pupils should always be encouraged to use their correct age on social media. This is because most social media platforms have built in child protection features – but typically these are only activated on accounts for those aged 13-16.

Schools, staff and individuals can report any pupil under the age of 13 who is operating a social media account, and if the report is properly submitted, the social media account will be taken down. Schools need to decide whether this is a task for a teacher, or a management decision for the school. Potential complications can arise if an individual decides to report an underage account, and the parent complains to the school management.

It is always best if a school account is used to report a user under the age of 13 since the child’s date of birth is required to file the report. The school has legal access to this data under Data Protection legislation. However, the staff, acting in a personal capacity, does not, and to use the child’s DOB information, for example from the class register, would actually be in breach of Data Protection legislation.

Reports of users under the age of 13 on Facebook can be made here:

www.facebook.com/help/contact/209046679279097

and similar reports to Twitter can be made here:

<https://support.twitter.com/groups/33-report-a-violation/topics/122-reporting-violations/articles/15789-how-to-report-violations>

In situations where a complaint has been made regarding an inappropriate comment or image on a member of staff’s Facebook account, it also needs to be considered as to whether the reporting of this inappropriate material has in turn revealed inappropriate use of social media.

Official school accounts – guidance:

Crofton Junior School has an official Facebook account where messages can be shared with members of the community

This account, created on behalf of the school is authorised by the Head Teacher, and the Governing Body.

Suggested guidance in brief:

Member of staff’s use of personal social networking will avoid:

- publishing content which is defamatory, abusive, discriminatory, in breach of data protection or otherwise brings the school into disrepute
- promoting extreme political, religious, racist or hate views which might impact on the staff’s ability to teach within equal opportunities guidelines
- Posting material which is in breach of school codes of conduct or school policies relating to staff
- Posting material which discusses confidential school matters relating to staff, pupils or parents
- Initiating contact with a pupil or “friending” a pupil or former pupil under the age of 18
- Use of social networks in “directed time”, or use of school ICT equipment in non-directed time.

In addition, pupils’ use of personal social networking should avoid:

- Use of any social networking if under the age of 13

- Use of social networking sites on the school site, including by using mobile devices independent of the school computer network
- Attempting to access or view private staff social network accounts.

Social Media in Regulatory Codes of Conduct:

Teaching in England:

School staff (including those working towards QTS) should use social media responsibly by complying with the 2012 Teacher Standards by:

- *'upholding public trust in the profession and maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour, within and outside school'*
- *'having regard for the need to safeguard pupils' well-being, in accordance with statutory provisions'*
- *'not undermining fundamental British values'*
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In practice, LAs and employers still regard the GTCE code as the relevant professional standard guidance in disciplinary matters. It is likely that this code will still underpin local level (ie LA and School) policies regarding use of the Internet and social media.

The GTCE code of conduct dera.ioe.ac.uk/11660/ made reference to this by stating members of staff should:

- Establish and maintain appropriate professional boundaries in their relationships with children and young people.
- Maintain reasonable standards in their own behaviour that enable them to maintain an effective learning environment and also to uphold public trust and confidence in the profession.
- Demonstrate honesty and integrity and uphold public trust and confidence in the teaching profession.
- Establish and maintain appropriate professional boundaries in their relationships with children and young people.
- Act appropriately towards all children and young people, parents, carers and colleagues, whatever their socio-economic background, age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, race, religion or belief.
- Follow school policies and procedures on communication with and involvement of parents and carers.
- Endeavour to develop productive and supportive relationships with all school colleagues.
- Uphold school policies and procedures, and raise any concerns about the life or running of the school in a responsible and appropriate way.
- Recognise the important role of the school in the life of the local community, and take responsibility for upholding its reputation and building trust and confidence in it.
- Maintain reasonable standards in their own behaviour that enable them to maintain an effective learning environment and also to uphold public trust and confidence in the profession.

Similar codes of conduct can also be found in the DfE Teachers' Standards guidance document - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teachers-standards>

The DfE published the following advice in relation to minimising the possibility for teachers to be bullied by pupils or parents. [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/374850/Cyberbullying Advice for Head Teachers and School Staff_121114.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/374850/Cyberbullying_Advice_for_Head_Teachers_and_School_Staff_121114.pdf)

- Do not leave a computer or any other device logged in when you are away from your desk.
- Enabling a PIN or passcode is an important step to protect you from losing personal data and images (or having them copied and shared) from your mobile phone or device if it is lost, stolen, or accessed by pupils.
- Familiarise yourself with the privacy and security settings of the social media and apps you use and ensure they are kept up to date.
- Be aware that your reputation could be harmed by what others share about you online, such as friends tagging you in inappropriate posts, photographs, or videos.

- Consider your own conduct online; certain behaviour could breach your employment code of conduct.

In brief, if teaching in England it is imperative for staff to familiarise themselves with all relevant school and LA policies which might relate directly or indirectly to social networking and use of social media. If the policies are absent or unclear, it would be wise for the member of staff to ask the Head Teacher specifically what the school's position is, and to ask for a response in writing.

In general, members of staff should avoid:

- Any interaction with current pupils or former pupils under the age of 18 on Facebook or other social media sites.
- Interaction with current parents using a personal Facebook account.

Staff should also ensure:

- The maximum level of privacy is selected on Facebook
- No direct interaction is made between the member of staff and pupil via Twitter
- Tagging is disabled on Facebook
- Disable profile visibility on Facebook searches.
- If a pupil attempts to "friend" via Facebook, decline the request.
- If using Twitter don't use direct messages or @replies to interact with pupils.
- If using Twitter sign up to the <https://support.twitter.com/articles/20170160-downloading-your-twitter-archive#> service to keep a transparent record of your Twitter usage.

The following text is the good practice advice from the GTCS document:

"How can members of staff minimise risk when using electronic communication and social networking?"

As a member of staff you should:

- always maintain a formal and courteous and professional tone in communicating with pupils and ensure that professional boundaries are maintained;
- only use official channels of communication and work e-mail addresses and be aware of and comply with employer's policies and guidance;
- not exchange private text, phone numbers, personal e-mail addresses or photos of a personal nature with pupils;
- firmly decline student-initiated 'friend' requests from pupils and do not instigate any yourself. Use your own discretion when dealing with friend requests from parents. It is acceptable to decline these invitations and remind parents of more formal channels which they can discuss their child's education;
- operate online in a way in which would not call into question your position as a professional;
- realise that pupils will be naturally curious about your personal life outside school and may try to find out more about you.
- manage your privacy setting and keep them under review. These are particularly important in regard to photos, and remember that no privacy mechanism is 100% guaranteed;
- ensure your settings prohibit others from tagging you in any photos or updates without your permission and you can ask others to remove any undesirable content related to you;
- audit and re-evaluate the information about you and who has access to it if you are entering a programme of teacher education, or your Teacher Induction Period;
- be aware that potential employers may try and view your online social media profiles;
- consider that conversations held online may not be private. Be aware of who may have access to what you post;
- assume that information you post can be accessed and altered;
- not discuss pupils, colleagues, parents or carers online or criticise your employer or others within the school community;
- respect pupil privacy and confidentiality at all times;
- use strong passwords and change them regularly. Protect your mobile phone/smart phone/tablet computer with a PIN, especially when in school to protect access to its content and potential misuse;
- bring the matter to the attention of your employer using the proper procedures, if you are the victim of cyber bullying or uncomfortable with comments, photos or posts made by pupils of or about you.

How can members of staff minimise risk for their pupils when using electronic communication and social networking?"

As a member of staff you should:

- report the matter to your manager using the appropriate procedures if you come across or are made aware of inappropriate use of electronic communication or social networking by a pupil or concerning a pupil;
- alert your pupils to and encourage them to use appropriate and safe online behavior;
- be aware of and comply with your employer's rules and policy in regard to taking and sharing photos of children.

In Conclusion - Before posting materials online stop and ask yourself:

1. Might it reflect poorly on you, your school, employer or the teaching profession?
2. Is your intention to post this material driven by personal reasons or professional reasons?
3. Are you confident that the comment or other media in question, if accessed by others, (colleagues, parents etc) would be considered reasonable and appropriate?"

Date of last review: 7th December 2017

Head teacher signed: P. Birdsall

Chair of Governors signed: J. Allen

