



St John with St Michael CE Primary

Use of Social Networking sites and other Forms of Social Media Policy

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The aim of this document is to provide advice and guidance for those working with children and young people in educational settings (including volunteers) regarding the use of Social Networking Sites. This policy has been produced with Guidance from Lancashire County Council and other recognized Professional associations and Trade Unions and should be followed by all staff and volunteers who work at St John with St Michael CE Primary School.

Background

The use of social networking sites such as Facebook, Bebo and MySpace is rapidly becoming the primary form of communication between friends and family. In addition there are many other sites which allow people to publish their own pictures, text and videos such as YouTube and blogging sites.

At St John with St Michaels CE Primary we realize that it would not be reasonable to expect or instruct employees not to use these sites which, if used with caution, should have no impact whatsoever on their role in school. Indeed, appropriate use of some sites may also have professional benefits.

It is naïve and outdated however to believe that use of such sites provides a completely private platform for personal communications. Even when utilised sensibly and with caution employees are vulnerable to their personal details being exposed to a wider audience than they might otherwise have intended. One example of this is when photographs and comments are published by others without the employees consent or knowledge which may portray the employee in a manner which is not conducive to their role in school.

Difficulties arise when staff utilise these sites and they do not have the knowledge or skills to ensure adequate security and privacy settings. In addition there are some cases when employees deliberately use these sites to communicate with and/or form inappropriate relationships with children and young people.

Specific Guidance

Employees who choose to make use of social networking site/media should be advised as follows:-

- That they familiarise themselves with the sites 'privacy settings' in order to ensure that information is not automatically shared with a wider audience than

intended;

- That they do not conduct or portray themselves in a manner which may:-
 - bring the school into disrepute;
 - lead to valid parental complaints;
 - be deemed as derogatory towards the school and/or it's employees;
 - be deemed as derogatory towards pupils and/or parents and carers;
 - bring into question their appropriateness to work with children and young people.

Staff should not form on-line 'friendships' or enter into communication with *parents/carers and pupils as this could lead to professional relationships being compromised (to be discussed).

On-line friendships and communication with former pupils should be strongly discouraged particularly if the pupils are under the age of 18 years. Children under the age of 13 should not have a registration on Facebook.

(*In some cases employees in schools/services are related to parents/carers and/or pupils or may have formed on-line friendships with them prior to them becoming parents/carers and/or pupils of the school/service. In these cases employees should be advised that the nature of such relationships has changed and that they need to be aware of the risks of continuing with this method of contact. They should be advised that such contact is contradictory to the Specific Guidance points above)

The DCSF document 'Guidance for Safer Working Practice for Adults who Work with Children and Young People' revised in January this year provides some clear guidance in this area which I have reproduced below.

Adults should also be circumspect in their communications with children so as to avoid any possible misinterpretation of their motives. They should not give their personal contact details to children and young people including e-mail, home or mobile telephone numbers, unless the need to do so is agreed with senior management and parents/carers. Internal e-mail systems should only be used by Class e-mails and supervised by staff at school. Further e-mails by Parents, Carers and Guardians should be sent to the school Bursar, who will forward to the relevant staff member.

Conduct outside work

It is often argued by employees that their conduct is of no relevance to their employer if it occurs outside of school and in their own time. Whilst it is true to say that all people have a right to a private life and this must be respected, the assumption that it is of no concern to their employer can sometimes be misplaced. In relation to the use of

social networking sites, where information can easily reach a wider audience than might have originally been intended, in certain circumstances, the conduct of the employee might also be deemed to have damaged the reputation of the school and the trust and confidence in the school that parents and the community can reasonably expect. Therefore, the Authority's advice to staff is that they should be very careful in how they communicate with pupils, friends and Parents via the use of technology and in terms of what they elect to share about themselves through internet based networking sites, such as Facebook and Twitter.

Conduct on social networking sites

- Do not make disparaging remarks about your employer/colleagues. Doing this in the presence of others may be deemed as bullying and/or harassment.
- Other users could post a photo on their profile in which you are named, so think about any photos you appear in. On Facebook, you can 'untag' yourself from a photo. If you do find inappropriate references to you and/or images of you posted by a 'friend' online you should contact them and the site to have the material removed. If you face disciplinary action as a result of being tagged, contact NASUWT/ Other School Representative organisations immediately.
- Parents and students may access your profile and could, if they find the information and/or images it contains offensive, complain to your employer.
- If you have any concerns about information on your social networking site or if you are the victim of cyberbullying, you should contact your NASUWT/Other School Representative Regional Centre immediately.
- Do not publish your date of birth and home address on Facebook. Identity theft is a crime on the rise with criminals using such information to access to your bank or credit card account.
- Stop the network provider from passing on your details to other companies for research and advertising purposes. For example, to stop Facebook from forwarding your details, click "Privacy Settings". Under "Applications and websites" click "edit your settings". Scroll down to "instant personalisation" and make sure the checkbox for "enable instant personalisation on partner websites" is unchecked.
- Ensure that any comments and/or images could not be deemed defamatory or in breach of copyright legislation.
- Remember humour is relative. For example, posting images and/or text about a recent stag or hen night may be deemed inappropriate. Likewise, a few 'light hearted' comments and/or images about colleagues may be taken out of context.
- Make sure you regularly check and refresh your site page to ensure it is free of any inappropriate comments and/or images. Remember that parents and students may access your profile and could, if they find the information and/or images it contains offensive, complain to your employer.

Privacy

- To ensure that your Facebook account does not compromise your professional position, please ensure that your privacy settings are set correctly.

As a minimum, NASUWT, NUT and ATL recommends the following:

Privacy Setting	Recommended security level
Send you messages	Friends only
See your friend list	Friends only
See your education and work	Friends only
See your current city and hometown	Friends only
See your likes, activities and other connections	Friends only
Your status, photos, and posts	Friends only
Bio and favourite quotations	Friends only
Family and relationships	Friends only
Photos and videos you're tagged in	Friends only
Religious and political views	Friends only
Birthday	Friends only
Permission to comment on your posts	Friends only
Places you check in to	Friends only
Contact information	Friends only

Always make sure that you log out of Facebook after using it, particularly when using a machine that is shared with other colleagues/students. Your account can be hijacked by others if you remain logged in - even if you quit your browser and/or switch the machine off. Similarly, Facebook's instant chat facility caches conversations that can be viewed later on. Make sure you clear your chat history on Facebook (click "Clear Chat history" in the chat window).

There are many professional and personal benefits to be obtained through social networking sites and therefore Staff can continue to use Social Network sites in accordance with the guidance set out in this policy.