

**Weston Primary School**

**Social Networking Policy**

2024

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| Approved by Governing Body: | June 2024 |
| Next review due: | June 2026 |

# **Introduction**

The school is aware and acknowledges that increasing numbers of adults and children are using social networking sites.

The widespread availability and use of social networking application bring opportunities to understand, engage and communicate with audiences in new ways. It is important that we are able to use these technologies and services effectively and flexibly. However, it is also important to ensure that we balance this with our reputation.

This policy and associated guidance is to protect staff and advise school leadership on how to deal with potential inappropriate use of social networking sites.

For example, our use of social networking applications has implications for our duty to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults.

The policy requirements in this document aim to provide this balance to support innovation whilst providing a framework of good practice.

# **Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to ensure:

* That the school is not exposed to legal risks
* That the reputation of the school is not adversely affected
* That our users are able to clearly distinguish where information provided via social networking applications is legitimately representative of the school.

Facebook is targeted at older teenagers and adults. They have a no under 13 registration policy and recommend parental guidance for 13 to 16 year olds.

The following are extracts from Facebook privacy policy:

“If you are under age 13, please do not attempt to register for Facebook or provide any personal information about yourself to us. If we learn that we have collected personal information from a child under age 13, we will delete that information as quickly as possible. If you believe that we might have any information from a child under age 13, please contact us”

We strongly recommend that minors 13 years of age or older ask their parents for permission before sending any information about themselves to anyone over the Internet and we encourage parents to teach their children about safe internet use.

MSN recommend 13 but do not appear to have a policy of debarring younger pupils. There are many primary age pupils active on MSN

**This guidance is to advise and protect staff from accusations of improper relationships with pupils.**

**Scope**

This policy covers the use of ALL social networking sites by all school stakeholders, including, employees, Governors and pupils. These groups are referred to collectively as ‘school representatives’ for brevity.

The requirements of this policy apply to all users of **all** social networking sites which are used for any school related purpose and regardless of whether the School representatives are contributing in an official capacity to social networking applications provided by external organisations.

All school representatives should bear in mind that information they share through social networking applications, even if they are on private spaces, are still subject to copyright, GDPR and Freedom of Information legislation, the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 and other legislation. They must also operate in line with the School’s

Equality and Diversity Policy.

# **Use of Social Networking sites in worktime**

Use of any social networking applications in work time for personal use is **not permitted.**

# **Social Networking as part of School Service**

All proposals for using any social networking applications as part of a school service (whether they are hosted by the school or by a third party) must be approved by the SLT first

Use of any social networking applications which are not related to any school services (for example, contributing to a wiki provided by a professional association) does not need to be approved by the Headteacher. However, school representatives must still operate in line with the requirements set out within the policy

# **School representatives must adhere to the following Terms of Use**

*The Terms of Use below apply to all uses of social networking applications by all school representatives. This includes, but is not limited to, public facing applications such as open discussion forums and internally-facing uses such as project blogs regardless of whether they are hosted on school network or not.*

*Where applications allow the posting of messages online, users must be mindful that the right to freedom of expression attaches only to lawful conduct.*

**Weston Primary School expects that users of social networking applications will always exercise the right of freedom of expression with due consideration for the rights of others and strictly in accordance with these Terms of Use.**

**Terms of Use**

* Must not be used to publish any content which may result in actions for defamation, discrimination, breaches of copyright, data protection or other claim for damages. This includes but is not limited to material of an illegal, sexual or offensive nature that may bring the school into disrepute.
* Must not be used in an abusive or hateful manner.
* Must not be used for actions that would put school representatives in breach of school codes of conduct or policies relating to staff.
* Must not breach the school’s misconduct, equal opportunities or bullying and harassment policies.
* Must not be used to discuss or advise any matters relating to school matters, staff, pupils or parents.
* No staff member should have a pupil or former pupil under the age of 18 as a ‘friend’ to share information with.
* Employees should not identify themselves as a representative of the school.
* References should not be made to any staff member, pupil, parent or school activity / event unless prior permission has been obtained and agreed with the Head Teacher.
* Staff should be aware that if their out-of-work activity causes potential embarrassment for the employer or detrimentally effects the employer’s reputation then the employer is entitled to take disciplinary action.

**Violation of this policy will be considered as gross misconduct and can result in disciplinary action being taken against the employee up to and including termination of employment.**

# **Guidance/protection for staff on using social networking**

* No member of staff should interact with any pupil or parent in the school on social networking sites.
* No member of staff should interact with any ex-pupil in the school on social networking sites who is under the age of 18.
* This means that no member of the school staff should request access to a pupil’s or parent’s area on the social networking site. Neither should they permit the pupil or parent access to the staff members’ area e.g. by accepting them as a friend.
* Where family and friends have pupils in school and there are legitimate family links, please inform the head teacher in writing. However, it would not be appropriate to network during the working day.
* It is illegal for an adult to network, giving their age and status as a child.
* If you have any evidence of pupils or adults using social networking sites in the working day, please contact the named Child Protection person in school Guidance/protection for Pupils on using social networking.
* No pupil under 13 should be accessing social networking sites. This is the guidance from both Facebook and MSN. There is a mechanism on Facebook where pupils can be reported via the Help screen.
* No pupil may access social networking sites during the school working day.
* No pupil should attempt to join a staff member’s areas on networking sites. If pupils attempt to do this, the member of staff is to inform the Head teacher. Parents will be informed if this happens.
* No school computers are to be used to access social networking sites at any time of day.
* Any attempts to breach firewalls will result in a ban from using school ICT equipment other than with close supervision.
* Please report any improper contact or cyber bullying to you tutor / class teacher in confidence as soon as it happens.
* We have a zero tolerance to cyber bullying.

# **Child Protection guidance**

If the head teacher receives a disclosure that an adult employed by the school is using a social networking site in an inappropriate manner as detailed above they should:

Record the disclosure in line with their child protection policy.

If the disclosure has come from a parent, take normal steps to calm the parent and explain processes.

If disclosure comes from a member of staff, try to maintain confidentiality.

The LADO will advise whether the member of staff should be suspended pending investigation after contact with the police. It is not recommended that action is taken until advice has been given.

If disclosure is from a child, follow your normal process in your child protection policy until the police investigation has been carried out.

# **Cyber Bullying**

By adopting the recommended no use of social networking sites on school premises, Weston Primary School protects ourselves from accusations of complicity in any cyber bullying through the provision of access.

Parents should be clearly aware of the school’s policy of access to social networking sites.

Where a disclosure of bullying is made, schools now have the duty to investigate and protect, even where the bullying originates outside the school.