



LOUGHTON SCHOOL

Social Media Policy

**(to be read in conjunction with the Online Safety and Acceptable
Use of IT Policy)**

Definition of Social Media:

Social Media applications include blogs, online discussion forums, collaborative spaces, media sharing services, micro-blogging applications. Examples on this non-exhaustive list are: Twitter, WordPress, Instagram, Facebook, MSN, YouTube and can also include instant messaging systems (SMS and chatrooms).

Social media and social networking sites/applications play an important role in the lives of many young people. We recognise that sites bring risks, but equally there are many benefits to be reaped. This document gives clarity to the way in which social media are to be used by pupils and school staff at Loughton School.

This document comprises five key areas:

- A. The use of social networking sites by pupils within school.**
- B. Use of social networking by staff in a personal capacity.**
- C. Creation of network accounts by staff for use in education.**
- D. Comments posted by parents/carers.**
- E. The use of social media by pupils out of school.**
- F. Dealing with incidents of online bullying.**

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

- i. Pupils have permission from a member of staff to use age appropriate sites for educational use.
- ii. Age restrictions for the site or app are fully regarded by staff and pupils.
- iii. Pupils follow 'netiquette' at all times.

Notes

If social media sites are used then staff should carry out a risk assessment to determine which tools are appropriate.

Sites must always be checked by staff before use by children.

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. Though we recognise the right of freedom of speech within personal time, it is important for them to protect their professional reputation by ensuring that they use their personal accounts in an appropriate manner.

- i. Staff must never add current pupils, or former pupils who are currently under the age of 18, as friends into their personal accounts. If there are extenuating circumstances where (age-appropriate) staff members' children are present on personal accounts, this should be made known to the Headteacher, so that a record may be kept. This is to protect staff should an allegation be made.
- ii. Staff should avoid having current parents as contacts on any social network site. If there are rare occurrences of this, then they should be logged with the Designated Safeguarding Lead. They must ensure that they follow the Code of Conduct, and that at all times they maintain a professional and positive demeanour which does not bring the school, other staff, governors or pupils into disrepute, or lead to comments regarding this.
- iii. Staff should read and comply with the schools' Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, to ensure they are aware of their professional responsibilities when conducting themselves online for safeguarding young people under the age of 18. This guidance is taken from "Safer Working Practice for Adults who work with Children and Young People in Education Settings"
- iv. Staff should not reference the school as their workplace on Social Media.
- v. Staff must not post pictures of school events without the headteacher's consent, including staff social events.
- vi. Staff must not use personal social networking sites within lesson times.

- vii. Staff will not use social networking in a way that conflicts with the current National Teacher's Standards. Current Teacher's Unions' guidance is available from the Online Safety Lead on request.
- viii. Staff must review and adjust their privacy settings to give them the fullest level of privacy and confidentiality. This is to protect staff should an allegation be made of professional misconduct. This must be checked regularly to ensure privacy levels are maintained.
- ix. Staff must not post negative or unprofessional comments (whether direct or indirect) about the school, pupils, parents or colleagues including Governors, including in private messaging systems where comments might be shared.

When using social media, staff demonstrating unreasonable, inappropriate or unprofessional conduct (as outlined in the Loughton School Staff Handbook/Code of Conduct) should be referred to the headteacher immediately. This may lead to the Disciplinary Procedures being invoked.

C. Creation of social network accounts by staff for use in education

All social media services must be approved by the headteacher in advance of any educational work being undertaken. This ensures that we can teach our children how to use such sites safely, and to safeguard them.

D. 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, ParentMail, emails, letters, home/school diaries and verbal discussion.

- i. Parents are not expected to post pictures of pupils other than their own children on social networking sites.
- ii. Parents should make any appropriate complaints through official school channels as outlined in the Loughton School complaints procedure, i.e. headteacher/deputy headteacher/Child protection lead, rather than posting them on social networking sites.
- iii. Parents should not post malicious or fictitious comments on social networking sites about any member of the school community.
- iv. Any personal comments made about staff by parents, will be followed up and may result in formal action being taken.

Any instances of defamatory remarks may involve criminal proceedings.

E. The use of social media by pupils out of school

Loughton School does not condone the use of age-inappropriate social media by pupils outside of school.

The school will make strong representation to parents, carers and relevant authorities if it is made aware that children are using age-inappropriate social media or other web sites (as outlined in the app user agreement).

It is the responsibility of parents to monitor the usage of social media apps by their children and to help them understand what is appropriate and acceptable. It is also the responsibility of parents to have access to their children's passwords, sites and accounts, and to monitor them on a regular basis for their safety.

The school will follow its safeguarding responsibility and will notify parents if a disclosure is made relating to the use of a social media account, as well as signpost parents to support and advice.

F. Dealing with incidents of online bullying (Cyberbullying)

Bullying using new technologies will be dealt with using the usual sanctions for bullying, as per the Anti-bullying Policy.

The school may take action against incidents that happen outside school if it:

- i. Could have repercussions for the orderly running of the school, or
- ii. Poses a threat or perceived threat to another pupil or member of the public, or
- iii. Could adversely affect the reputation of the school or individual, or
- iv. An image or content has been posted without the permission of the individual(s)

Use of social networking sites to harass, bully or intimidate would be covered by this, irrespective of when/where the post was made.

Instances of online bullying will be dealt with according to the school's Behaviour Policy and will be documented in the e-Safety Incident Log (Annex 2 of e-Safety and Acceptable Use of IT Policy), stored centrally. This may include a reference to the Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub, and /or Thames Valley Police.

References to other policies

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Online Safety and Acceptable Use of IT Policy
- Staff Handbook & Code of Conduct Policy