

# Gravel Hill School

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Title of policy: Use of Social Media

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Signed by Chair of Governors

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## Rationale

The widespread availability and use of social media applications brings opportunities to understand, engage, and communicate in new and exciting 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 duties to our school, the community, our legal responsibilities and our reputation. For example, our use of social networking applications has implications for our duty to safeguard members of the school community.

The policy requirements in this document aim to provide this balance to support innovation whilst providing a framework of good practice. They apply to all members of staff, governors and parental groups with access to the school network.

The purpose of the policy is to:

- Protect the school from legal risks
- Ensure that the reputation of the school, its staff and governors are protected
- Safeguard all children
- Ensure that any users are able to distinguish clearly where information provided via social media is legitimately representative of the school

## Definitions and Scope

Social networking applications include, but are not limited to, Blogs, Online discussion forums, Collaborative spaces, Media sharing services, 'Microblogging' applications, and online gaming environments. Examples include Twitter, Facebook, Windows Live Messenger, YouTube, Flickr, Xbox Live, Blogger, Tumblr, Last.fm as well as comment streams on public websites such as newspaper sites.

Many of the principles of this policy also apply to other types of online presence such as virtual worlds. All members of staff should bear in mind that information they share through social networking applications, even if they are on private spaces, are still subject to copyright, data protection and Freedom of Information legislation and other legislation. They must also operate in line with the school's Equalities, Child Protection, Acceptable Use and Conduct Policies.

Within this policy there is a distinction between use of school-sanctioned social media for professional educational purposes and personal use of social media.

## Use of Social Media in practice

### Personal use of social media

It is not advisable to invite, or accept an invite from parents/carers and children, to become your friends on social networking sites. There may be a conflict of interest and security and privacy issues, but where relationships are already established staff should proceed with caution, being fully aware of the social media guidelines and the teacher's code of conduct.

Any communication received from children on any personal social media sites or on mobile phones must be reported to the designated person for Child Protection. All incidents will be logged and dealt with as per the school's Acceptable Use Policy.

If any member of staff is aware of any inappropriate communications involving any child in any social media these must immediately be reported as above.

Members of the school staff are strongly advised to set all privacy settings to the highest possible levels on all personal social media accounts.

All email communication between staff and members of the school community on school business must be made from an official school email account except in circumstances given prior approval by a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT).

Staff should not use personal email accounts to make contact with members of the school community on school business, nor should any such contact be accepted, except in circumstances given prior approval by the Headteacher.

Staff and governors are prohibited from any posts or comments which refer to confidential matters related to the school and members of its community on any social media accounts. Staff and governors are advised to avoid posts or comments that refer to specific, individual matters related to the school and members of its community on any social media accounts.

Staff are also advised to consider the reputation of the school in any posts or comments related to the school on any social media accounts.

Staff should not accept any current pupil of any age or any ex-pupil of the school under the age of 18 as a friend, follower, subscriber or similar on any personal social media account. Staff should only access personal social media sites in their own time.

### **School-sanctioned use of social media**

There are many legitimate uses of social media within the curriculum, and to support pupil learning, and all classes require the use of blogs to deliver the National Curriculum 2014 expectations for Computing. There are also many possibilities for using social media to enhance and develop pupils' learning.

When using social media for educational purposes, the following practices must be observed:

- Staff should set up a distinct and dedicated social media site (class blogs) or account for educational purposes. This should be entirely separate from any personal social media accounts held by that member of staff and should be linked to an official school email account.
- The URL and identity of the site should be notified to the appropriate member of the SLT before access is permitted for students.
- The content of any school-sanctioned social media site should be solely professional and should reflect well on the school.
- Staff must not publish photographs of children, identify by name any child featured in photographs, or allow personally identifying information to be published on school social media accounts without the written consent of parents/carers.
- Care must be taken that any links to external sites from the account are appropriate and safe.

- Any inappropriate comments on, or abuse of, school-sanctioned social media should immediately be removed and reported to a member of SLT.
- Staff should not engage with any direct messaging of students through social media where the message is not public. This is in accordance with the school's Acceptable Use Policy.

### **Important considerations when using school-sanctioned social media**

When placing information on school-sanctioned social networking sites, staff, governors, parents and carers should follow these guidelines:

- Do not include any information that breaches copyright and should link to other material rather than cutting and pasting it.
- Do not defame (libel) anyone. A member of staff, governor, parent or carer who makes a defamatory statement that is published on the internet may be legally liable for any damage to the reputation of the individual concerned.
- Do not include personal information about an individual without his/her consent as this would risk breaching the Data Protection Act 1998 which is a criminal offence
- Do not include material that is abusive, defamatory, sexist, racist or that could be interpreted as harassment or bullying.
- Do not bring Gravel Hill Primary School into disrepute.
- Staff should behave respectfully and should not engage in topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory such as politics or religion.

### **Cyberbullying**

Gravel Hill Primary School is committed to ensuring that all of its staff, governors, parents and carers and pupils are treated with dignity and respect. Bullying and harassment of any kind will not be tolerated. Cyber-bullying methods could include text messages, emails, phone calls, instant messenger services, circulating photos or video clips or by posting comments on web sites, blogs or in chat rooms. Personal blogs that refer to colleagues without their consent is also unacceptable. Staff, governors, parents and carers who cyber-bully could also face criminal prosecution under various laws, including the Malicious Communications Act 1988. This is in conjunction with the school's Managing Behaviour Policy.

### **Security and identity theft**

Staff, governors, parents and carers should be aware that social networking websites are a public forum, particularly if they are part of a 'network'. Staff, governors, parents and carers should not assume that their entries on any website will remain private. Staff, governors, parents and carers must also be security conscious and should take steps to protect themselves from identity theft, for example by restricting the amount of personal information that they give out. Social networking websites allow people to post detailed personal information such as date of birth, place of birth and, for example, favourite football team which can form the basis of security questions and passwords.

### **Disciplinary Action**

If necessary, action will be taken against any member of staff, governor, parent or carer who is found to have breached this Policy.