

# Edward Peake C of E (VC) Middle School

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## Social Media Policy

Social media and social networking sites play an important role in the lives of many people. We recognise that sites bring risks, but equally there are many benefits for all school stakeholders. This policy gives clarity to the way in which social media/mobile phones are to be used by pupils, governors, visitors, parent helpers and all staff at Edward Peake C of E Middle School. It will also provide guidance for parents.

There are four key areas:

- **The use of social networking sites by pupils within school**
- **Use of social networking by staff and governors in a personal capacity**
- **Comments posted by parents/carers**
- **Dealing with incidents of online bullying**

### **The use of social networking sites by pupils within school**

The school's Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) outlines the rules for using IT in school and these rules therefore apply to use of social networking sites. Such sites are blocked on the school network for pupils through the digital firewall and therefore cannot be used/accessed using equipment school. The use of mobile/smart phones by pupils is strictly prohibited and therefore no social media should be accessed on the school site. Information regarding the procedures for dealing with a breach by a pupil can be found the ICT Acceptable Use Policy Incorporating E-Safety, Data Security & Disposal of ICT Equipment Policy.

### **Social Media Platforms - Recommended Age**

In terms of private use of social networking sites by a child it is generally understood that children under the age of 13 are not permitted to be registered on Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, Tumblr, Reddit, Snapchat and Secret.

However, the minimum age on LinkedIn is 14, on WhatsApp and TikTok it is 16 and on Vine it is 17 years old.

Some platforms, such as YouTube, WeChat and Kik, have a minimum age required of 18, although children aged 13-17 can sign up with parental permission.

It is therefore acknowledged that pupils could have access to these sites outside of school and this may cause issues which could impact on pupils during the school day. It remains the sole responsibility of parents and carers to police pupil activity on social media platforms accessed outside the school network.

### **Use of social networking by staff and Governors in a personal capacity**

It is possible that a high proportion of staff and Governors will have their own social networking site accounts. It is important for them to protect their professional reputation by ensuring that they use their personal accounts in an appropriate manner.

This policy is included in the Staff Handbook, which is issued annually to staff to ensure they are familiar with the guidelines agreed. In using social media:

- Staff must **never** add pupils as 'friends' into their personal accounts (including past pupils under the age of 16).
- Staff are **strongly advised** not to add parents or colleagues as 'friends' into their personal accounts.
- Staff **must not** post comments about the school, pupils, parents or colleagues including members of the Governing Body.
- Staff must not use social networking sites within lesson times (for personal use).
- Staff should only use social networking in a way that does not conflict with the current National Teacher's Standards.
- Staff should regularly review and adjust their privacy settings to give them the appropriate level of privacy and confidentiality.
- Staff should read and comply with 'Guidance for Safer Working Practice for Adults Who Work with Children and Young People'.
- Inappropriate use by staff and governors may lead to disciplinary action as outlined in the Code of Conduct for All Adults policy.

All staff and governors are guided in all aspects of their role by the seven principals of public life which informs their actions. It is important that all staff and governors conduct themselves in a professional way and ensure that potential risks are mitigated when using social networking. Care should be taken to avoid: -

- Publishing anything that brings the school into disrepute
- Releasing confidential information into the public domain
- Initiating or continuing an online discussion between some but not all members of the Governing Body undermining collective knowledge and responsibility.

### **Comments posted by parents/carers**

Parents and carers will be made aware of their responsibilities regarding their use of social networking via the Home School Agreement.

Methods of school communication include the website, Twitter, newsletters, letters and verbal discussion. School policies and documents provide further information regarding appropriate channels of communication and means of resolving differences of opinion. Effective communication following principles of mutual respect is the best means of ensuring the best learning experiences for every pupil.

Parents should not post pictures of pupils, other than their own children, on social networking sites where these photographs have been taken at a school event.

Parents should make complaints through official school channels rather than posting them on social networking sites.

Parents should not post malicious or fictitious comments on social networking sites about any member of the school community.

If a member of staff or governor becomes aware of any inappropriate pictures or comments on social networking sites they should advise the Headteacher immediately.

### **Dealing with incidents of online bullying/inappropriate use of social networking sites**

The school's Anti-Bullying Policy sets out the processes and sanctions regarding any type of bullying by a pupil on the school roll.

In the case of inappropriate use of social networking by parents, the Headteacher/and or the Governing body will contact the parent asking them to remove such comments and seek redress

through the appropriate channels such as the Complaints Policy. Any requests for the removal of content will be also be put in writing.

The Governing Body understands that, "There are circumstances in which police involvement is appropriate. These include where postings have a racist element or where violence is threatened or encouraged."

Furthermore, "Laws of defamation and privacy still apply to the web and it is unlawful for statements to be written...which:

- expose (*an individual*) to hatred, ridicule, contempt or extremism
- cause (*an individual*) to be shunned or avoided
- lower (*an individual's*) standing in the estimation of right-thinking members of society or
- disparage (*an individual in their*) business, trade, office or profession."

(National Association of Headteachers)

### **Review of Policy**

Due to the ever changing nature of information and communication technologies it is best practice that this policy be reviewed annually.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Chair of Governors

Date approved June 2021

Review date June 2022