

St Joseph's P.S.  
Social Networking Policy



## Social Networking Policy

### Introduction to the Policy:

In St. Joseph's PS we believe that the Internet and other digital technologies are very powerful resources which can enhance and potentially transform teaching and learning when used effectively and appropriately.

This Policy is written also we regards to 'Circular 2016/26-'On Line Safety'.

In St. Joseph's PS we are aware and acknowledge that increasing numbers of adults and children are using social networking sites including among others, Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, and Instagram.

Use of ICT allows pupils to gain confidence and ability in an ever-changing society and prepares them for the challenges of a rapidly developing and evolving technological world. Using ICT aims: -

- To provide opportunities to enable all our staff, pupils and parents to be confident, competent and independent users of ICT.
- To provide an environment where access to ICT resources is natural and common place.
- To ensure it has a fundamental role in developing and enhancing our school's key learning aims in promoting the pupils' education, physical and social needs.
- To encourage our staff and pupils to work collaboratively.

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 staff understand the appropriate procedures if they abuse other people or are being abused.

### **Social Networking**

Circular 2016/6 States that "Social media provides an excellent vehicle for communicating directly with parents/carers and the wider community".

Social networking is everywhere. It is common to find parents, children, co-workers and others on such sites. With social networks people across the world have access to tools and options that were previously non-existent. Whilst this allows many new opportunities to connect there are also potential dangers. It is a platform where almost anybody can see what we are doing. Whilst tagging photos of friends or posting comments, it can be easily overlooked that someone else who has been invited onto a social networking site can also view them. Often there is a minimal amount of control over who ultimately gets to see items posted.

Once something appears on the internet, it is almost impossible to remove. As these sites continue to grow in popularity, so too does the value of the information on them to parties other than those directly involved. Social networking users need to reflect what they are posting onto the internet.

Whilst recognising the benefits of social networks for new and exciting forms of communication, this policy sets out the principles that pupils, staff and parents / guardians are expected to follow when using social media.

This policy applies to personal web space such as social networking sites on, for example, Facebook, MySpace, Instagram, SnapChat, Blogs, Twitter, chatrooms, forums, podcasts, social bookmarking sites such as del.icio.us and content sharing sites such as Flickr and YouTube.

The internet is a fast moving technology and it is impossible to cover all circumstances or be aware of all the latest forums of emerging media and platforms. This policy covers the use of existing and any future social networking platforms.

## **Guidelines for Pupils**

Our guiding principle is "*respect for yourself and consideration for others.*"

- Pupils must not use social media and the internet in any way to attack, insult, abuse or defame other pupils or any member of staff.
- Pupils must not use social media in a way that brings disrespect to our school.
- Photographs, videos or any image of pupils, staff or any member of our school community must not be published on a personal or public web space without prior permission from the school.
- Pupils and the wider school community should not post images or videos from school trips on any social media site.
- Social network sites should never be accessed within school.

Failure to follow these guidelines may result in disciplinary action.

## **Guidelines for St. Joseph's Primary School Staff**

It is possible that many staff 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:

- Staff must never add pupils as friends into their personal accounts.
- Staff must not use social networking sites within lesson times.
- Staff need to use social networking in a way that does not conflict with the current GTCNI standards.
- Staff should review and adjust their privacy settings to give them the appropriate level of privacy and confidentiality.
- Posting derogatory comments about pupils, parents or colleagues is never acceptable. Staff are required to uphold the reputation of the school, to maintain reasonable standards in their own behaviours, and to uphold public trust in their profession.

- Staff may have legitimate reasons to use social network accounts to support learning in the classroom or, for example, to communicate with the sports team. All social media uses must be approved by the Principal in advance.

Inappropriate use by staff should be referred to the Principal.

### **Guidelines for Parents / Guardians / Carers**

Parents / Guardians / Carers should be aware of their responsibilities regarding the use of social networking:

- Parents / Guardians / Carers should not post pictures of pupils other than their own children on social networking sites.
- Parents / Guardians / Carers should make complaints through the official school channels rather than posting them on social networking sites which can be detrimental and possibly damaging to the school community and, as such, are not beneficial to the children.
- Parents / Guardians / Carers should not post inaccurate, malicious or fictitious comments on social networking sites about any member of the school community or any school policy, process or procedure.
- Malicious or inappropriate comments will be reported and may result in accounts being removed. Fictitious and defamatory comments may also result in legal action.
- Action will also be taken if any inappropriate comments are made in which a member of the school community can be identified from the content of the comment.
- The Board of Governors of St. Joseph's Primary School will take appropriate action in order to protect the school's reputation and that of its staff, pupils and parents / guardians / carers, governors, and anyone else directly linked to St. Joseph's Primary School. Where appropriate, comments will be reported to the PSNI.

To support the pupils of St. Joseph's Primary School and using guidance from the Department of Education, the Education Authority and outside agencies,

members of staff will give clarity to pupils and parents / guardians / carers about the acceptable use of the internet and mobile devices by children whilst in St. Joseph's Primary School.

Parents / Guardians / Carers have full responsibility for their child's use of the internet, mobile devices and social networks outside of school.

Guidance / protection for pupils on using social networking

No pupils under 13 years of age 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 or by accessing the link -

<https://www.facebook.com/help/contact/209046679279097>

Circular 2016/26 states "An increasing number of schools now have their own social media accounts. However, most social media platforms have a recommended 13-years lower age limit which would rule out the direct use of social media for primary school pupils".

## **St. Joseph's Primary School Safeguarding and Child Protection Code of Conduct Regarding the Use of Social Media**

This Code of Conduct applies to everyone within our school community.

Safeguarding and Child Protection is a key responsibility for everyone within our school community. An increasingly important aspect of Safeguarding and Child Protection concerns our use of social media. Below is a 'Code of Conduct Regarding the Use of Social Media' that we expect all members of the school community (children, parents, staff, governors and all regular visitors) to adhere to.

All online communications regarding the school are to be transparent and open to scrutiny. The Board of Governors will take appropriate action to ensure the safety and security of those within the school community and to protect the

school's reputation. Any breaches of this 'Code of Conduct' will be fully investigated.

1. When using social media everyone has a responsibility to treat others within the school community with respect. Individuals must not make any derogatory, defamatory, rude, threatening or inappropriate comments about anyone connected to the school. Offensive language should not be used.
2. There must not be any postings on social media that links the school to any form of illegal conduct or which might damage the reputation of the school.
3. Confidential information regarding anyone within the school community must not be posted online. In relation to specific school activities, personal contact details including email addresses, home or mobile telephone numbers must not be made available online unless this has been agreed with the Principal.
4. Photographs or video clips of children completing activities in school must not be posted on social media by parents or children without the permission of the Principal.
5. The school's name, logo or documents must not be posted online without the permission of the Principal.
6. Messages that compromise the security of the school premises must not be posted online.
7. Where images or video clips of children are posted on the school website or other online facility endorsed by the school, the names of the children will not be provided.
8. Parents are responsible for their children's use of social media outside of school. They should be aware of the age restrictions regarding particular forms of social media, for example, Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook and Whatsapp state clearly that their registered users should be at least 13 years of age.
9. Social media sites should be set as 'Private' and children must not be listed as approved contacts.

10. Staff or volunteers working in the school must not use social media to communicate directly with children who attend the school.
11. Staff must not use school ICT equipment to use social media without the permission of the Principal.
12. Please note that this 'Code of Conduct' is part of the school's wider 'e-Safety Policy'.

Adopted March 2019

Review due 2021