



SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Wightwick Hall School

Review date: Spring Term 2022
Curriculum & Learning Committee

Next Review: Spring Term 2023

Social Networking Policy

Overview

What is social media? For the purpose of this policy, social media is the term commonly used for websites which allow people to interact with each other in some way – by sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interests.

Social networking sites such as; Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are now widely used. This type of media allows people to communicate in ways that were not previously possible that can positively enhance means of communication. The school recognises that most stakeholders use this in a positive and responsible manner. However, for a minority, such sites can be inappropriately used as a means of expressing negative or offensive views about school and their staff instead of approaching the school where the vast majority of concerns are easily dealt with and resolved. This document sets out the school's approach to parental use of such sites and sets out the procedures we will follow and action we may take when we consider that parents have used such facilities inappropriately. When we have referred to "parent" in this document, we also include carers; relatives; or anyone associated with the school.

Objectives

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Encourage social networking sites to be used in a beneficial and positive way by parents;
- Safeguard students, staff and anyone associated with the school from the negative effects of social networking sites; Safeguard the reputation of the school from unwarranted abuse on social networking sites;
- Clarify what the school considers to be appropriate and inappropriate use of social networking sites by parents;
- Set out the procedures school will follow where it considers parents have inappropriately or unlawfully used social networking sites to the detriment of the school, its staff or its students, and anyone else associated with the Academy;
- Set out the action the school will consider taking if parents make inappropriate use of social networking sites.

Appropriate use of social networking sites by parents

Social networking sites have potential to enhance the learning and achievement of students and enable parents to access information about school and provide feedback efficiently and easily. In addition, the school recognises that many parents and other family members will have personal social networking accounts, which they might use to discuss/share views about school issues with friends and acquaintances.

As a guide, individuals should consider the following prior to posting any information on social networking sites about school, its staff, its students, or anyone else associated with it:

- Is the social networking site the appropriate channel to raise concerns, give this feedback or express these views?
- Would private and confidential discussions with school be more appropriate? E.g. if there are serious allegations being made/concerns being raised. Social media/internet sites should not be used to name individuals and make abusive comments about those people. Please contact school to discuss any concerns you may have.
- Are such comments likely to cause emotional or reputational harm to individuals who would not be justified, particularly if school has not yet had a chance to investigate a complaint?
- The reputational impact that the posting of such material may have to school; any detrimental harm that the school may suffer as a result of the posting; and the impact that such a posting may have on students' learning.

Inappropriate use of social networking sites by parents

Although social networking sites may appear to be the quickest and easiest way to express frustrations or concerns about school (and those associated with it), it is never appropriate to do so. Where a parent has a concern, this must be made through the appropriate channels by speaking to the class teacher, the Head teacher or Chair of Governors so they can be dealt with fairly, appropriately and effectively for all concerned (See Complaints Policy).

The school considers the following examples to be inappropriate uses of social networking sites. (This list is non-exhaustive and intended to provide examples only):

- Making allegations about staff or students at school or cyber-bullying;
- Making complaints about the school or staff at Wightwick Hall School;
- Making defamatory statements about school or staff at Wightwick Hall School;
- Posting negative/offensive comments about specific pupils/staff at Wightwick Hall School;
- Posting racist comments;
- Posting comments which threaten violence.

Parents should also ensure that their children are not using social networking/internet sites in an inappropriate manner. It is expected that parents/carers explain to their children what is acceptable to post online. Parents/carers are also expected to monitor their children's online activity, including in relation to their use of social media.

Procedure the school will follow if inappropriate use continues:

In the event that any student or parent/carer of a child/ren at Wightwick Hall School is found to be posting libellous or defamatory comments on Facebook or other social network sites, they will be reported to the appropriate 'report abuse' section of the network site. All social network sites have clear rules about the content which can be posted on the site and they provide robust mechanisms to report contact or activity which breaches this. The school will 'hide' such comments that any parent/carer make and will be asked to attend a meeting with the Head teacher to discuss the breaking of the Home-School Agreement and the possible repercussions of such action. If the parent refuses to comply with these procedures and continues to use social networking sites in a manner the school considers inappropriate, the school will consider taking the following action:

- Take legal advice and/or legal action where the information posted is defamatory in any way or if the circumstances warrant this;
- Set out the school's concerns to parents in writing, giving you a warning and requesting that the material in question is removed;
- Contact the Police where the school feels it appropriate – for example, if it considers a crime (such as harassment) has been committed; or in cases where the posting has a racial element, is considered to be grossly obscene or is threatening violence;
- If the inappropriate comments have been made on a school forum, the school may take action to block or restrict that individual's access to that website or forum;
- Contact the host/provider of the Social Networking site to complain about the content of the site and ask for removal of the information;

Facebook has an extensive reporting system giving you control over the content you see across the site. If any content or behaviour that is deemed inappropriate, it will be reported to Facebook. Facebook works closely with the UK Safer Internet Centre, CEOP, the police and safety experts to help protect people from harm. Once the issue has been reported to Facebook it will be reviewed by a highly trained member of Facebook's User Operations team. The status of a report you have made in the Reporting Dashboard.

Using social media on behalf of Wightwick Hall School

- Authorised staff (Helen Smith) should only use the official social media school account for communicating with parents on social media.
- Staff must always act in the best interests of children and young people when creating, participating in or contributing content to social media sites.

- Authorised staff to be aware of safeguarding issues and parental consent to which students have permission to be included on social media. Photographs must be checked carefully to ensure that children who are on the restricted list are never shown on the social media.
- Specific, named administrators (Helen Smith) will be responsible for maintaining the content of school Facebook and Instagram page in line with school/Academy Trust Safeguarding Policy. There will be regular communication between the administrator and members of the school leadership (Mrs Morris) to identify what content is appropriate for posting on the school website.
- Staff must give permission for their images to be used in relation school produced materials accessible by members of the public (online or in print), whether controlled by the school or not.
- Named moderators (Helen Smith and Niamh Bruce) are responsible the monitoring of comments made by parents.
- Permission will be required for any person to be allowed into the school's Facebook group. This will be set up in the form of answering security question before being allowed in the group.
- Social media accounts for the school remain property of the organisation. Named administrator will be required to provide the employer with full access to the accounts upon request and when the employer leaves the organisation.

Cyber bullying and Harassment

- Cyberbullying is making use of information and communications technology, particularly mobile phones and the internet, to deliberately undermine, humiliate or otherwise cause distress to the person on the receiving end. Staff must not use social media and the internet to attack, insult, abuse or defame students, their family members, colleagues, or other professionals.
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- It should be noted that a person does not need to directly experience this form of victimisation in order for it to be classed as cyber bullying/harassment. The fact that a person is unaware that offensive or derogatory comments about them have been placed on websites still fits the criteria of cyber bullying/harassment.
- Staff should not personally engage with cyberbullying incidents and should immediately report incidents to the Head Teacher or for centrally employed staff, the Head of HR.
- If a member of Staff is the victim (receives any threats, abuse or harassment from members of the public through their use of social media), they should keep any records of the abuse and if appropriate, screen prints of messages or webpages with time, date and address of the site. Staff must report such incidents using the school's procedures.

Questions

What are we going to use this for? What are the outcomes?

- To positively promote our school to the community and also potential new parents.
- To engage more with parents, particularly those hard-to-reach parents.
- To get messages out in a timely manner.
- To share events and announcements.
- To celebrate the work of students and our school as a whole.

Could this be promoting social media to underage users?

- No, social media is a communication tool that you are going to use to engage with the school community, not our students.
- The school Facebook group is set to only be visible to account holders that have input their DOB of being 18 years or older.

Are we putting ourselves at risk of getting negative or derogatory comments?

- The group can be locked down to disallow people 'posting' to the group, but you can't stop others 'commenting' on your posts.
- Make it clear to parents in your initial communication that negativity will not be tolerated and will be dealt with in the same way as if it was face-to-face.
- The named person (Helen Smith and Niamh Bruce) will be responsible to monitoring comments on posts on the school page.
- The rules of the group will be visible at the top of the group page.

Will it take a long time to post and schedule updates? Will this put extra pressure on the responsible named person?

- No, basic text updates take seconds, at most an update will take a minute or two.

- The named person (Helen Smith) responsible for the content of the school social media group is excited to be involved with the set-up and delivery of posting content.

- The messaging services that Facebook provide will be switched off, parents will continue to contact the school the official way, via the school telephone number or staff work email address.

Will we be posting pictures/videos of the students? If so, how will this be managed?

- Parental consent will be strictly adhered to when posting any photos and or videos to the school's social media pages.