Orchard Community Primary School

Parents' Social Media Policy

This policy was approved by the Governing Body of Orchard Primary School at their meeting on.........................

Signed   **Chair of Governors**

Version	Date	Author	Reason for Change
0.1	9/2018	FS	New Policy
0.2	9/2021	FS	Review
0.3	12/2024	FS	Review

Review Frequency	Next Review Date
Every 3 years	12/2027

Introduction

At Orchard, we acknowledge that social media is an integral part of 21st Century life.

It presents an exciting opportunity for us to share what takes place in school and to celebrate everything that the school does. The widespread availability and use of social networking applications bring opportunities to understand, engage and communicate with audiences in new ways. It is important that we are able to use these technologies and services effectively and flexibly, and consider the potential impact on the schools' reputation.

This policy provides parents/carers with guidance around the use of social media and sets out the procedures school leadership will follow and the action we may take when we consider that parents/carers have used such facilities inappropriately. For example, the use of social networking applications has implications for our duty to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults.

This policy aims to support innovation whilst providing a framework of good practice.

NB: 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 safe, sensible, beneficial and positive way by parents;
- Safeguard pupils, 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 the 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 pupils, and anyone else associated with the school; and
- Set out the action the school will consider taking if parents make inappropriate use of social networking sites.
- Ensure the school is not exposed to legal risks arising from social media usage.
- Ensure the reputation of the school is not adversely affected from social media usage.
- Ensure users are able to clearly distinguish where information provided via social networking applications is legitimately representative of the school.

What is social media?

Social media is the term commonly used for a range of websites and apps that allow users to directly interact with one another. This takes many forms such as video and photo sharing websites such as YouTube, Instagram and Twitter.

Most commonly, people interact with one another through websites such as Facebook and Twitter.
The school itself has its own Facebook account, Twitter account and Instagram account and regularly posts updates on Class Dojo and the school website.

The terminology Social Media is not exhaustive and also applies to the use of communication technologies such as mobile phones, cameras, tablets or other handheld devices and any other emerging forms of communication technologies.

Appropriate use of social networking sites by parents/carers

Social networking sites have potential to enhance the learning and achievement of pupils and enable parents to access information about the 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 the school, its staff, its pupils, or anyone else associated with the school:

- Is the social networking site the appropriate channel to raise concerns, give this feedback or express these views?
- Would private and confidential discussions with the 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 the school to discuss any concerns you may have.
- Are such comments likely to cause emotional or reputational harm to individuals which would not be justified, particularly if the school has not yet had a chance to investigate a complaint?
- The reputational impact that the posting of such material may have to the 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 pupils' learning.

Inappropriate use of social networking sites by parents/carers

Social media is a wonderful tool by which users can communicate with one another and spread positive news and messages. However, the school recognises that occasionally, parents/carers may use social media platforms to spread negativity and derogatory comments. Although social networking sites may appear to be the quickest and easiest way to express frustrations or concerns about the school (and those associated with it), it is never appropriate to do so.

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

- Making allegations about staff, pupils or parents or cyberbullying.
- Making complaints about the school or staff.
- Making defamatory comments about the school or staff.
- Posting negative/offensive comments about the school or specific pupils, staff, governors or volunteers (either named or implied) at the 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 or have underage accounts. 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

The school understands that parents may not always realise when they have used social networking sites inappropriately.

Therefore, as a first step, the school will usually discuss the matter with the parent and to ask that the relevant information be deleted from the social networking site in question.

We will always deal with concerns raised by parents in a professional and appropriate manner and where parents/carers raise queries, concerns or complaints on social media, they will be asked to make contact directly with the school rather than posting comments on social media so that their allegation or complaint can be dealt with fairly, appropriately and effectively for all concerned in line with the Complaints Procedure.

With regards to offensive or racist comments, or those which threaten violence, the post will be logged and a record made in line with the school's behaviour, anti-bullying and child protection & safeguarding policies. Report the user posting comments using the 'Report Abuse' protocols.

In the event that a pupil, parent or other member of the public continues to post comments of the above nature, the school will report the abuse to the relevant social network.

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 also expect that any parent/carer removes such comments immediately and will be asked to attend a meeting with the Headteacher 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 in writing, giving 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;
- Take other legal action against the individual.

External communication with parents/carers

The school has many lines of communication to maintain positive working relationships with parents/carers. These may include: letters, phone calls, email, face-to-face meetings, Microsoft Teams, Class Dojo, the website, newsletters, progress reports and parent-teacher meetings.

Effective communications not only deliver the specific information required, but also enable the school to demonstrate values and our school ethos. Communication with parents should always reinforce parental support and engagement.

Communications will seek to establish open and positive relationships with parents, whilst always ensuring that these relationships are professional.

Parents are asked not to communicate with staff via any form of networking site, personal mobile or email. Where there is a need to communicate directly with parents/carers (i.e. on school trips) staff will have access to school provided equipment i.e. mobile phones.

Monitoring

School social media accounts will be monitored regularly. Any comments, queries or complaints made through these accounts must be responded to within 24 hours (or on the next working day if received at the weekend) even if only to acknowledge receipt. Regular monitoring and intervention is essential in case a situation arises where bullying or any other inappropriate behaviour arises on a school social media account.