

EASTFIELD INFANTS' & NURSERY SCHOOL

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

1 Aim

1.1 The aim of this policy is to set clear guidelines for the use of social networking websites by staff, pupils and parents, eg blogs, wikis, social networking websites, podcasts, forums, message boards, or comments on web-articles, eg Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn Bebo, You tube, Flickr, MSN and other similar sites.

2 Background

2.1 As the internet is an ever-growing environment, more and more social networking websites are appearing, including those that are not primarily a social networking website but do offer such features.

This presents exciting opportunities for schools to have conversations with the wider community to share news and information and seek opinions.

Alongside that it must be recognised that there are risks attached to the use of social media. Distribution of material cannot be controlled and it is important that users are aware of the pitfalls as well as the benefits of the technology. This includes some of our vulnerable young children.

Whilst it is not illegal for the under 18's to have an account on social networking websites, these websites frequently have policies which require users to be over a particular age eg Facebook's minimum age is 13. It is however very easy for young people (or indeed adults) to get around these policies by entering false information eg an incorrect date of birth to open an account.

It is essential that, if children under the age of 13 are using social networking websites in contravention of the site's terms and conditions, they are aware of how to protect their information, how to report abuse or inappropriate content and that their parents/carers are aware that they are online.

3 Staff Using Social Networking Websites

3.1 Staff are within their rights to use social networking websites and we are not, nor would not want to be, in a position to prevent staff from using them. However, we do ask that staff adhere to the following aspects of our policy:

- Do not engage in activities on the internet that might bring the school into disrepute.
- Do not use the school logo on personal pages
- Do not reveal confidential information about school or any individual associated with school
- Do not include photos of staff or children without their permission
- Where possible do not accept parents, pupils or former pupils as 'friends' on your site.
- Under no circumstances should offensive comments be made about school or colleagues. This could be deemed a disciplinary offence.

During the school day access should be minimal and take place substantially out of normal working hours (ie during lunch hours, before 9 am or after 4:00 pm).

3.2 Under no circumstances should pupils or former pupils under the age of 18 be befriended on a social networking website (eg: no accepting of 'friend requests' on Facebook). If a child attending this school requests the befriending of a staff member, their parents should be informed.

3.3 In the event that a parent makes contact with a staff member through a social networking website, the staff member must use extreme caution and it is recommended that they provide their school email address as a point of contact for professional purposes. In the event of communicating with a parent or adult associated with a child who attends the school, no comments should be made about children, staff or parents.

3.4 Any statements or status remarks should not contain any comments about the school, staff, parents or children.

3.5 All views expressed by staff members on social networking websites are their personal views and are in no way endorsed, nor supported, by the school. Staff should always assume that anything posted on social media would be attributed to them as a professional.

3.6 School employees and volunteers must not identify themselves as associated with the school in any way, unless expressly authorised by the Head Teacher. If the school sets up an official social media account, authority to use it will be given to individual members of staff by the Head Teacher.

4 Children Using/Accessing Social Networking Websites

4.1 Under no circumstances should a child access social networking websites in school unless it is for a purpose instigated by the child's teacher. The school network system prohibits children from accessing these websites but the bypassing of the system or accessing through a mobile device is strictly prohibited.

4.2 If any reports are received of children making inappropriate comments about staff or other children, hard copies will be obtained and the child will be reported immediately (to the website host) to have their account terminated. The parents/carers of the child will also be notified and this could result in further action. If the comment is about a member of staff a referral will be made to the county's legal services.

5 Parents Using Social Networking Websites

5.1 If hard copies of inappropriate comments about members of staff, children within the school or school decisions are received, the matter will be referred to the county's legal services and subsequent action will follow.

5.2 Parents must not, under any circumstances, access social networking accounts whilst assisting on school visits. If there is evidence to prove that this has happened then the parent will no longer be used as a helper on subsequent visits.

6. REVIEW

Policy approved by governors on 10 November 2014

Signed

Chair of Curriculum & Policy Committee

Planned review date: Autumn 2017