SAINT EDMUND'S AND ST THOMAS' CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL
SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY 2018

OVERVIEW

Our school recognises that many in our school community use the internet for personal purposes and that they may participate in social networking on websites such as Facebook and Twitter. In addition parents, carers, staff and other members of the community may set up personal web blogs on the internet and participate in 'chat rooms'. This type of media allows people to communicate in ways that were not previously possible and indeed enhances our range of communication with great advantages.

This channel of communication is, however, tremendously powerful and influential and should be used responsibly so that our children, our staff and the whole school community are kept safe and not subject to negative and offensive views which could lead to reputational or emotional harm.

Social Media Definition

Social media includes a wide variety of forms such as internet forums, social networks, magazines, podcasts blogs, video and virtual game worlds. Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat Facebook and Youtube are well recognised platforms on which social communication of this type takes place. Messaging platforms such as Whatsapp, Snapchat and Facebook Messenger are also included within this definition.

Objectives

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Encourage social networking sites to be used in a beneficial and positive way by parents adults and others connected with the school;
- 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 parent;

- 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
- 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, children, staff and Governors

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.**
- Are such comments likely to cause emotional or reputational harm to individuals? Has the school had an opportunity to investigate a complaint before it is broadcast online?
- 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 and children, staff and governors

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 not appropriate to do so. Other channels, such as a private and confidential discussion with the school, or using the school's formal complaints process are much better suited to this.

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 pupils at the school/cyber-bullying;
- Making complaints about the school/staff at the school;
- Making defamatory statements about the school or staff at the school;
- Posting negative/offensive comments about specific pupils/staff at the school;
- Posting racist comments;
- Posting comments which threaten violence.
- Posting photos of other children from school events without seeking the expressed permission of all parents of the children concerned

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, especially in relation to their use of social media and take responsibility to prevent cyber bullying.

It should be remembered that children are putting themselves at grave risk by other users of the internet when using a location facility on certain blogging or social networking sites.

Should children set up blogs or podcasts using networking platforms such as Youtube and make comments about the school, then parents will be held accountable. The school expects that parents will adhere to the age restrictions on social networking sites until the law changes and social networking organisations adopt greater responsibility in assessing risks to all children who may be vulnerable to cyber bullying and emotional distress.

Procedures the school will follow if inappropriate use continues

The school will always try to deal with concerns raised by parents in a professional and appropriate manner and 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 to try and resolve a concern and ask that the relevant information be removed from the chosen social networking site. If the parent refuses to do this 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 the parent in writing, giving them 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 racist element, is considered to be grossly obscene or is threatening violence;
- If the inappropriate comments have been made on a school website or online 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.

This policy document has been designed to strengthen our home school understanding and proceeds from the interests of well-being of everybody who is a part of our Catholic school community. We ask you to read this policy and return your signed acknowledgement of support

All parents are asked to sign the attached parental agreement sheet

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Parent, Staff and Governor Agreement

I have read and understand the school's social media policy. I am aware of the school's policy on inappropriate use of social networking and its impacts on individuals, the school community and risks to safeguarding.

I am fully aware of the schools' response when its policy is challenged to the detriment of reputation or harm of members of its community

I fully support the policy and understand the rationale for its implementation

Signed …………………………………………………………. PRINTED NAME……………………………….

Date…………………………………………………………………