



*Cedar Integrated Primary School*

# Policy on Parental use of Social Networking and Internet Sites

## **Overview**

Social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter are now widely used. This type of media allows people to communicate in ways that were not previously possible. However, such sites can be inappropriately used by some as a means of expressing negative or offensive views about schools and their staff. This document sets out this 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;
- Safeguarding 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 take if parents make inappropriate use, or continuous appropriate 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 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?
- We would like to reiterate 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**

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. 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 or sectarian comments;
- Posting homophobic 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 the school deems 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.

## **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 the matter and to ask that the relevant information be removed from the social networking site in question. If the parent refuses to do this and continues to use social networking sites in a manner the School considers inappropriate, the School will take the following action:

1. Take legal advice and/or legal action where the information posted is defamatory in any way or if the circumstances warrant this;
2. Set out the School's concerns to you, the individual concerned, and issue a written request that the material be removed, and that no further material pertaining to the relevant subject will be posted;
3. 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;
4. If the inappropriate comments have been made on a school website or online forum, the School will take action to block or restrict that individual's access to that website or forum;
5. Contact the host/provider of the Social Networking site to highlight the content of the site and ask for removal of the information;
6. If necessary, take appropriate legal action.

## Facebook – Parental Acceptable Use Policy

Dear Parent/Carer,

At Cedar Integrated Primary School we endeavour to develop the school to better meet the needs of the whole school community. From evaluation of the parental questionnaires it was brought to our attention that a possible area for development was the creation of a school Facebook site.

We have set the Facebook site as a closed group, and it will be used as a way of showcasing the great work which goes on in Cedar, as well as being used as a communication tool to keep verified parents / carers up to date with key information, alongside the email and text systems. Parents / carers will need to 'join group' and be accepted by one of the site's administrators. In order to be accepted, the following Acceptable Use Declaration must be returned to your child's class teacher, or Sheenagh.

I will not post anything which is:

- Violent or that which glorifies violence
- Criminal, terrorist or glorified criminal activity
- Racist, sectarian, or designed to incite racial or sectarian hatred
- Of extreme political opinion
- Pornographic or with otherwise unsuitable sexual content
- Crude, profane or with otherwise unsuitable language
- Blasphemous or mocking of religious and moral beliefs and values
- Homophobic or designed to incite homophobic hatred
- Offensive in the normal context of Cedar Integrated Primary School
- In breach of law, data protection or computer misuse

I will not:

- Mention children by name
- Give out my personal details
- Post a photo of any child without previous permission from their parent/carer
- Attempt to impersonate the identity of others, or by any means send messages misrepresenting the originator or recipient address

I am aware of Cedar Integrated Primary School's complaints procedure, and the school have issued me a copy of this. I am aware that the Facebook site is not forum for complaints, and I will not use it as such.

Name:

Child/children:

Signed:

Date: