



GREAT ECCLESTON  
COPP CHURCH OF  
ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL



SOCIAL  
NETWORKING  
POLICY

Reviewed and Updated on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2019

Copp Cares

*"Let us love, not in word, but in truth and action." (1 John 3:18)*

Talk to me and I will listen, show me and I will remember,

Involve me and I will learn, encourage me and I will thrive.

*Copp, the village school, where everyone is special and where God will help us grow.*

## **Rationale**

The aim of this document is to provide advice and guidance as well outline laws and legislations for employees of, and volunteers at, Great Eccleston Copp CE Primary School regarding the use of social networking sites.

The school is aware and acknowledges that increasing numbers of adults and children are using social networking sites. The sites with the widest use are Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, but in this modern world we also need to become aware that there are hundreds of similar sites and even in online gaming, users can freely chat and interact with people around the world.

The widespread availability and use of social networking brings 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. However, it is also important to ensure that we balance this with our reputation.

This policy and associated guidance is to protect staff and advise school leadership on how to deal with potential inappropriate use of social networking online. For example, our use of social networking applications has implications for our duty to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults. The policy requirements in this document aim to provide this balance to support innovation whilst providing a framework of good practice.

## **Background**

The use of social networking sites such as Facebook, TikTok, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp and Snapchat is rapidly becoming the primary form of communication between friends and family. In addition there are many other sites which allow people to publish their own pictures, text and videos such as YouTube and blogging sites.

It would not be reasonable to expect or instruct employees not to use these sites which, if used with caution, should have no impact whatsoever on their role in school. It is naïve and outdated however to believe that use of such sites provides a completely private platform for personal communications. Even when utilised sensibly and with caution, employees are vulnerable to their personal details being exposed to a wider audience than they might otherwise have intended. One example of this is when photographs and comments are published by others without the employee's consent or knowledge which may portray the employee in a manner which is not conducive to their role in school.

Difficulties arise when staff utilise these sites and they do not have the knowledge or skills to ensure adequate security and privacy settings. In addition there are some cases when employees deliberately use these sites to communicate with and/or form inappropriate relationships with children and young people.

## Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that:

- the school is not exposed to legal risks
- the reputation of the school is not adversely affected
- our users are able to clearly distinguish where information provided via social networking applications is legitimately representative of the school.

## Scope

- This policy covers the use of social networking applications by all school stakeholders, including, employees, Governors and pupils. These groups are referred to collectively as 'school representatives' for brevity.
- The requirements of this policy apply to all uses of social networking applications which are used for any school related purpose and regardless of whether the school representatives are contributing in an official capacity to social networking applications provided by external organisations. Social networking applications include, but are not limited to:
  - ❖ Blogs, for example Blogger
  - ❖ Twitter
  - ❖ Online discussion forums, such as netmums.com
  - ❖ Collaborative spaces, such as Facebook
  - ❖ Media sharing services, for example YouTube
- All school representatives should bear in mind that information they share through social networking applications, even if they are on private spaces, are still subject to copyright, data protection and Freedom of Information legislation, the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 and other legislation. They must also operate in line with the School's Equality and Diversity Policy.

## Code of Conduct

Employees who choose to make use of social networking site/media should:-

- ensure that they familiarise themselves with the 'privacy settings' of sites in order to ensure that information is not automatically shared with a wider audience than intended
- **not** conduct public online "conversations" which relate to school matters
- **not** refer to the school in posts
- **not** conduct or portray themselves in a manner which may:-
  - bring the school into disrepute
  - lead to valid parental complaints
  - be deemed as derogatory towards the school and/or its employees/volunteers
  - be deemed as derogatory towards pupils and/or parents and carers bring into question their appropriateness to work with children and young people

- **not** form online "friendships" or enter into communication with parents/carers and pupils as this could lead to professional relationships being compromised\*
- **not** form online "friendships" and communication with former pupils.

\* In some cases workers in school are related to parents/carers and/or ex pupils OR are associated with them for other professional reasons and have formed online "friendships". In these cases, workers in school must be aware that the nature of such relationships may have changed and that they need to be aware of the risks of continuing with this method of contact.

UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES SHOULD A WORKER IN SCHOOL HAVE AN ONLINE "FRIENDSHIP" WITH ANY CHILD UNDER THE AGE OF 14, AS THIS IS ILLEGAL.

### **Use of Social networking sites in work time**

Use of social networking applications in work time for personal use only is not permitted. The school does have a Facebook page that is updated by teachers and a Twitter page that is updated by Mrs Melvin regularly that is solely used for parental and local community information.

### **Social Networking as part of School Service**

All proposals for using social networking applications as part of a school service (whether they are hosted by the school or by a third party) must be approved by the Headteacher first.

Use of social networking applications which are not related to any school services (for example, contributing to a wiki page provided by a professional association) does not need to be approved by the Headteacher. However, school representatives must still operate in line with the requirements set out within the policy.

School representatives must adhere to the following Terms of Use below which apply to all uses of social networking applications by all school representatives. This includes, but is not limited to, public facing applications such as open discussion forums and internally-facing uses such as project blogs regardless of whether they are hosted on the school network or not.

Where applications allow the posting of messages online, users must be mindful that the right to freedom of expression attaches only to lawful conduct. Copp CE Primary School expects that users of social networking applications will always exercise the right of freedom of expression with due consideration for the rights of others and strictly in accordance with these Terms of Use.

## Terms of Reference

### **Social Networking applications:**

- must not be used to publish any content which may result in actions for defamation, discrimination, breaches of copyright, data protection or other claim for damages. This includes but is not limited to material of an illegal, sexual or offensive nature that may bring the school into disrepute.
- must not be used for the promotion of personal financial interests, commercial ventures or personal campaigns
- must not be used in an abusive or hateful manner
- must not be used for actions that would put school representatives in breach of school codes of conduct or policies relating to staff
- must not breach the school's misconduct, equal opportunities or bullying and harassment policies
- must not be used to discuss or advise any matters relating to school matters, staff, pupils or parents.
  
- No staff member should have a pupil or former pupil as a 'friend' to share information with.
- Employees should not identify themselves as a representative of the school.
- References should not be made to any staff member, pupil, parent or school activity/ event unless prior permission has been obtained and agreed with the Headteacher.
- Staff should be aware that if their out-of-work activity causes potential embarrassment for the employer or detrimentally effects the employer's reputation then the employer is entitled to take disciplinary action.
- No member of staff should interact with any pupil in the school on social networking sites
- It is illegal for an adult to network, giving their age and status as a child
- Any evidence of pupils or adults using social networking sites in the working day should be reported to the DSL or the Deputy DSL.

Violation of this policy will be considered as gross misconduct and can result in disciplinary action being taken against the employee up to and including termination of employment.

### **Guidance/protection for Pupils on using social networking**

No pupil under 13 should be accessing social networking sites. This is the guidance from both Facebook and MSN. There is a mechanism on Facebook where pupils can be reported via the Help screen; at the time of writing this policy the direct link for this is:

[http://www.facebook.com/help/contact.php?show\\_form=underage](http://www.facebook.com/help/contact.php?show_form=underage)

Facebook is targeted at older teenagers and adults. They have a strict no under-13 registration policy and recommend parental guidance for 13 to 16 year olds.

The following are extracts from the Facebook privacy policy:

*"If you are under age 13, please do not attempt to register for Facebook or provide any personal information about yourself to us. If we learn that we have collected personal information from a child under age 13, we will delete that information as quickly as possible. If you believe that we might have any information from a child under age 13, please contact us.*

*We strongly recommend that minors 13 years of age or older ask their parents for permission before sending any information about themselves to anyone over the Internet and we encourage parents to teach their children about safe internet use practices. Materials to help parents talk to their children about safe internet use can be found on this help page."*

Most social networking applications recommend a minimum age of 13.

This guidance is to advise and protect staff from accusations of improper relationships with pupils:

No pupil may access social networking sites during the school working day.

All mobile phones must be handed into the office at the beginning of the school day.

No school computers are to be used to access social networking sites at any time of day unless authorised by the Headteacher.

Any attempts to breach firewalls will result in a ban from using school ICT equipment other than with close supervision.

Any improper contact or cyber bullying should be reported to the class teacher immediately as the school has zero tolerance for cyberbullying.

### **Cyberbullying**

By adopting the recommended no use of social networking sites on school premises, Copp CE Primary School protects themselves from accusations of complicity in any cyberbullying through the provision of access.

Where a disclosure of bullying is made, we will investigate, even where the bullying originates outside the school.

If parent /carers refuse to engage and bullying continues, this may be referred to the police as harassment.

This guidance also applies to text and mobile phone cyberbullying.

### **Child protection guidance**

If the DSL receives a disclosure that an adult employed by the school is using a social networking site in an inappropriate manner as detailed above the DSL or Deputy DSL will:

- record the disclosure in line with the Child Protection Policy
- refer the matter to the LA who will investigate via the local Police Child Protection Team.