



# Dereham Church Infant and Nursery School



## **SOCIAL NETWORKING POLICY FOR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS March 2019**

### **Social Networking Policy for Staff in School**

#### **1.0 Introduction**

The Governing Body of Dereham Church Infant and Nursery School is committed to ensuring that all staff are aware of their responsibilities in connection with the growing use of social networking sites. It recognises that the use of such sites have become a very significant part of life for many people. They provide a positive way to keep in touch with friends and family, and can be used to exchange ideas and thoughts on common interests.

Examples of such sites include, but are not limited to: Blogs, Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, YouTube, Windows Live Spaces, MSN, forums, bulletin boards, multiplayer online gaming, chatrooms and instant messenger.

Staff are expected to keep a professional distance from pupils and there should be a clear separation of the private social lives of staff and that of pupils. There is no need for social networking to go on between staff and pupils and there is no clear educational benefit.

It is important that staff are able to use technologies and services effectively and flexibly whilst ensuring that they do not make themselves vulnerable. However, it is also important to ensure that this is balanced with the Governing Body's duty to safeguard children, the reputation of the school, the wider community and the Local Authority.

#### **2.0 Who does this policy apply to?**

This policy will apply to all staff in schools whose contracts of employment have been issued by the Local Authority on behalf of the Governing Body. There is also a section relating specifically to Parent Helpers, Volunteers, Students and Supply Staff who may have contact with children on a regular basis.

#### **3.0 Aims**

The policy aims to:

- Enable employees to use social networking sites safely and securely;
- Ensure that employees are aware of the risks associated with the inappropriate use of social networking sites;
- Safeguard employees in connection with the use of social networking sites and ensure they



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do not make themselves vulnerable;

- Ensure the Governing Body maintains its duty to safeguard children, the reputation of the school, the wider community and the Local Authority.

## 4.0 Legislation

The following legislation must be considered when adhering to this policy:

- Human Rights Act 1998
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Computer Misuse Act 1990, amended by the Police and Justice Act 2006
- Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA)

## 5.0 Responsibilities

**5.1** The Governing Body shall:

- Ensure this policy is implemented and procedures are in place that deal with the use of social networking sites;
- Ensure that all employees have access to this policy and that new employees are made aware of it.

**5.2** Headteachers/Line Managers/Governors shall:

- Be familiar with this policy and guidelines and ensure that employees understand the policy and their own responsibilities;
- Ensure that staff are aware of the risks of the use of social networking sites and the possible implications of the inappropriate use of them;
- Instigate disciplinary procedures where appropriate to do so;
- Seek advice where necessary from Human Resources on the approach to be adopted if they are made aware of any potential issue.

**5.3** Staff shall:

- Behave responsibly and professionally at all times in connection with the use of social networking sites;
- Co-operate with management in ensuring the implementation of this policy.

## 6.0 Use of Social Networking Sites

For employees' own security all communication via social networking sites should be made with the awareness that anything said, shown or received could be made available, intentionally or otherwise, to an audience wider than that originally intended. It is therefore important that staff



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follow the following procedures:

- Staff must not access social networking sites for personal use via school information systems, using school equipment or personal devices while on school premises;
- Staff must ensure their pages are locked down and accessible only to their friends. Their 'wall' should only have their name and appropriate photograph on it, and clearly state that the user does not share information publicly,
- Staff should not mention their place of work on their sites/pages;
- Staff are advised not to accept friend requests from parents in the school. It is not appropriate in a professional working relationship. If a staff member has a personal friend who happens to be a parent in the school, they should consider carefully if accepting them as a friend is appropriate and if so consider carefully the content of what is put on their pages,
- Staff must not accept pupils as friends – personal communication could be considered inappropriate and unprofessional and makes staff vulnerable to allegations;
- Staff must not accept any children under 18 years of age. Staff are there in a position of trust and as a mentor and educator and it would be inappropriate for such a child to be privy to personal information about a staff member through this medium;
- Staff are advised not to be friends with recent pupils. The potential for staff to be compromised in terms of wall content and open to accusations makes the risk not worth taking;
- Staff should not place inappropriate photographs on any social network space; e.g. photos that compromise their professional integrity or the reputation of the school;
- Staff should not post indecent remarks;
- If a member of staff receives messages on their social networking profile that they think could be from a pupil they must report it to their Line Manager/Headteacher and contact the internet service or social networking provider so that they can investigate and take the appropriate action;
- Staff are not allowed to write about their work or the children or staff in the school relating to any work based situation. Confidentiality applies in this case, and disciplinary action may be taken if necessary
- Staff must not disclose any information that is confidential to the school or disclose personal data or information about any individual/colleague/pupil, which could be in breach of the Data Protection Act;
- Staff must not disclose any information about the school/Local Authority that is not yet in the public arena;
- In no circumstances should staff post photographs of pupils;
- Staff should not post pictures of other staff on social occasions without their permission;
- Staff should not make defamatory remarks about the school/colleagues/pupils or the Local Authority or post anything that could potentially bring the school/Local Authority into



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disrepute;

- Staff should not use mobile phones during teaching/contact time with the children;
- Under no circumstances should personal mobile phones be used to take pictures or video clips the children.
- Staff should not disclose confidential information relating to his/her employment at the school;
- Care should be taken to avoid using language which could be deemed as offensive to others.
- Staff should adhere to the LA code of conduct and teachers must additionally adhere to the Teachers' Standards 2012

## 7.0 Breaches of the Policy

The Governing Body does not discourage or prevent staff from using social networking sites. However, all staff should be aware that the Governing Body will take seriously any occasions where the services are used inappropriately. If occasions arise of what could be deemed to be online bullying or harassment, these will be dealt with in the same way as other such instances.

Under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA), the Headteacher can exercise his/her right to monitor the use of the school's information systems and internet access where he/she believes unauthorised use may be taking place; to ensure compliance with regulatory practices; to ensure standards of service are maintained; to prevent or detect crime; to protect the communication system and to pick up messages when someone is away from school. If any such monitoring detects the unauthorised use of social networking sites disciplinary action will be taken.

If any instances of the inappropriate use of social networking sites are brought to the attention of the Headteacher, depending on the seriousness of the allegations, disciplinary action may be taken.

There may be instances where the School or Local Authority will be obliged to inform the police of any activity or behaviour for which there are concerns as to its legality.

## 8.0 Parent Helpers, Volunteers, Students and Supply Staff who may have contact with children on a regular basis.

The use of social networking sites by those mentioned above cannot be as strictly regulated but some of these rules still apply.

In addition, these groups should never:

- Discuss anything that is seen or heard at the school on any form of social networking site
- Express opinions about the school that could cause offence, bring the school into disrepute or affect the confidentiality of the school or those within it
- Take any photographs of school events or activities they are involved with as a volunteer/student or use them on any form of social networking site or share them publicly;
- Use their mobile phone or other personal device whilst acting as a volunteer/student for



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social networking activity

These groups must:

- Adhere strictly to the confidentiality agreement signed when volunteering in the school which outlines expectations including that of use of social networking sites

## **9.0 Parents/Carers**

Parents/Carers of children at the school must also be aware that police action and/or legal advice will be taken in relation to the following activities on social networking sites:

- Comments that are derogatory to the staff, children and members of the school community
- Threats of any kind against any staff member or pupil
- Comments that could bring the school into disrepute
- Untrue comments about the school, its staff or its community

Our Working Together agreement reminds parents that as a family they will not talk about the school, it's staff or families in a detrimental way on any social networking sites.

See also:

- Volunteer and work experience policy
- Safeguarding policy