

## St James' C of E Primary School

### Social Networking Policy

***This policy should be read in conjunction with other relevant policies e.g school Disciplinary and Dismissal Policy and Procedure, Equality Policy, Staff Code of Conduct, Safeguarding policy, E-Safety Policy***

At St James' C of E Primary School we believe in the concept of the learning community and lifelong learning. Through our teaching we aim to equip children with the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to become independent learners, with the ability to make informed choices about the important things in their lives. We believe that appropriate learning and teaching experiences help children to continue to develop and explore their potential.

Maintaining an online presence is vital for schools, not only in terms of keeping the school community up to date with what's happening in the school, but also in terms of attracting potential enrolment. Having a school website is an essential part of this, but web users must specifically visit the school website regularly to receive the information. By having Facebook, Instagram and/or Twitter pages, the school is feeding school information, news and notices directly into the personal news feeds of parents and the wider school community.

All staff and workers at the school need to be aware of the risks and accountability of inappropriate or inadvertent provision of information about themselves, the school or its pupils and staff or the wider school community in the Social Media arena.

Every employee or volunteer working within the school setting is accountable for information published and must be aware that such information may be monitored by the Headteacher or their representative.

It is important to note that information available in the public domain which has the potential for harm, distress or reputational damage may lead to disciplinary action being taken.

**This policy recognises that new technologies are an integral and growing part of everyday life and make an important contribution to teaching and learning opportunities. However the rapid evolution of social networking technologies requires a robust policy framework and this policy aims to:**

- a) Set out the rationale behind the school's use of Social Networks
- b) Assist staff working with children to work safely and responsibly with the internet and other communication technologies and to monitor their own standards and practice
- c) Set clear expectations of behaviour and/or codes of practice relevant to social networking for educational, personal or recreational use
- d) Give a clear message that unlawful or unsafe behaviour is unacceptable and that, where appropriate, disciplinary and/or legal action will be taken
- e) Support safer working practice
- f) Minimise the risk of misplaced or malicious allegations made against adults who work with pupils
- g) Prevent adults abusing or misusing their position of trust.

**This document applies to all staff who work in the school whether paid or unpaid.**

The principles that underpin this policy are:

- a) Adults who work with pupils are responsible for their own actions and behaviour and must avoid any conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question their motivation and intentions.
- b) Adults in the school must work and be seen to work, in an open and transparent way.
- c) Adults in the school must continually monitor and review their own practice in terms of the continually evolving world of social networking and ensure that they consistently follow the guidance contained in this document.

## School Social Networking Rationale

St James' makes use of social networking profiles/sites in a variety of ways. The schools aims are:

- To continue to advance our school communication system with information shared through Facebook, Instagram and/or Twitter, along with the existing methods of newsletters, text messages, email, and the school website.
- To publicise school events, and increase awareness about school fundraising.
- To announce any updated information that appears on our website via Facebook, Instagram and/or Twitter.
- To highlight positive school achievements in a forum where they can be shared by the school community.
- To make school announcements (e.g. school closure due to snow)
- To use Facebook, Instagram and/or Twitter as a means of marketing the school to a wider audience.
- To link the school's use of various social networking platforms to the school's website.
- To engage the community that St James C of E Primary School serves and act as a key component of our school's online presence.
- To facilitate communication and networking opportunities between parents especially new or prospective parents.
- To maintain contact with past parents and past pupils.

## Safer Social Networking Practice

This document applies to current social networking platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and/or Twitter etc and all other current and emerging technologies. The following points apply to adults who maintain their own social networking profiles/sites, and encompasses all adults who work at the school, whether paid or unpaid, including all volunteers:

- a) **All adults** must adhere to, and apply the principles of this document in all aspects of their work. Failure to do so may lead to action being taken under the disciplinary procedure.
- b) In their own interests, adults within school settings need to be aware of the dangers of putting their personal information onto social networking sites, such as addresses, home or mobile phone numbers. This will avoid the potential for pupils or their families or friends having access to staff outside of the school environment. It also reduces the potential for identity theft by third parties.
- c) All adults, particularly those new to the school setting, should review their social networking sites when they join the school to ensure that information available publicly about them is accurate and appropriate. This includes any photographs that may cause embarrassment to themselves and/or the school if they were to be published outside of the site.
- d) Adults should never make a 'friend' of a pupil at the school where they are working on their social networking page, and should be extremely cautious about becoming 'friends' with ex-students particularly where siblings or other relatives may continue to attend the school.
- e) Staff should never use or access social networking pages of pupils.
- f) Confidentiality must be considered at all times. Users of social networking sites have the potential to discuss inappropriate information and employees need to ensure that they do not put any confidential information on their site about themselves, the school, the governing body, the Local Authority, their colleagues, pupils or members of the public.

- g) Employees need to ensure that when they are communicating about others, even outside of work, that they give due regard to the potential for defamation of character. Making allegations on social networking sites (even in their own time and in their own homes) about other employees, pupils or other individuals connected with the school, or another school, or the Local Authority could result in disciplinary action being taken against them.
- h) Adults within the school setting must never post derogatory remarks or offensive comments on-line or engage in on-line activities which may bring the school into disrepute or that could be interpreted as reflecting negatively on their professionalism.
- i) Some social networking sites and other web-based sites have fields in the user profile for job title etc. Employees need to take care when putting any information onto the site that could identify either their profession or the school where they work. In some circumstances this could damage the reputation of the school and the profession.
- j) Any and all official school social networking accounts will be opened by members of the school's Senior Leadership Team only. Usernames and Passwords will be held by SLT members. School staff may be given usernames and passwords if this will help them to promote the aims of this policy and this will be recorded through written or electronic correspondence. Usernames and passwords will not be shared with children or parents of children at the school.
- k) This document does not replace or take priority over any advice contained in the school's codes of conduct, or other policies issued around safeguarding or IT issues. It is intended to both supplement and complement any such documents.

### **Communications and Social Contact**

This document applies to current social networking platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and/or Twitter etc and all other current and emerging technologies. The following points apply to adults who maintain their own social networking profiles/sites, and encompasses all adults who work at the school, whether paid or unpaid, including all volunteers:

- a) Adults should keep their personal phone numbers, work login or passwords and personal email addresses private and secure. Where there is a need to contact pupils or parents the school email address and/or telephone should be used.
- b) Adults must understand who is allowed to view the content on their pages of any sites they use and how to restrict access to certain groups of people.
- c) Communication between pupils and adults by whatever method, must take place within clear and explicit professional boundaries.
- d) Adults must not request, or respond to, any personal information from a pupil.
- e) Adults must ensure that all communications are transparent and open to scrutiny. They should also be circumspect in their communications with pupils in order to avoid any possible misinterpretation of their motives or any behaviour which could possibly be construed as 'grooming' in the context of sexual offending.

- f) E-mail or text communications between an adult and a pupil outside agreed protocols may lead to disciplinary and/or criminal investigations. This also includes communications through internet based web sites. Internal e-mail systems must only be used in accordance with the school's policy.
- g) There will be occasions when there are social contacts between pupils and staff, where for example the parent and teacher are part of the same social circle. These contacts however, will be easily recognised and should be openly acknowledged with the Headteacher where there may be implications for the adult and their position within the school setting.
- h) There must be awareness on the part of those working with or in contact with pupils that some social networking contacts, especially where these are not common knowledge, can be misconstrued as being part of a grooming process. This can also apply to social networking contacts made through outside interests or through the adult's own family.
- i) Any concerns must be raised with the Headteacher at the earliest opportunity.

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## **Appendix 1 – St James' C of E Twitter account: Guidelines for the school**

1. The school Twitter account will be a Public account. Senior leaders will monitor the followers and block anyone who interacts with the account in an inappropriate way
2. The school Twitter account will only tweet between the hours of 8am and 6pm between Monday and Friday. The only time tweets outside of this time are for school events (e.g. football matches, residential trips, performances) or to share urgent school news (e.g. closers due to adverse weather). Only St James' staff will be allowed to publish tweets on the St James' account.
3. The school Twitter account will only follow educationally link accounts. No personal accounts, unless they are educationally linked, will be followed.
4. The school Twitter account will not identify specific children in tweets. There may be general references (e.g. "a Y4 girl helped out her teacher yesterday by...") or the use of first names "John has worked really hard this week...") but this will be done in such a way as to ensure that specific children cannot be identified outside of school.
5. The school Twitter account will not post photos of children that will allow them to be identified. It will post photos of work and learning. A photo may be used of a child creating a piece of artwork that features the child's hands or back of the head if the child is unidentifiable. If the child's unidentifiable photo is used their initials may be used to make reference to the children. E.g. John Smith with be JS.
6. The school Twitter account will be used to share positive messages about the school.
7. The account may be used to share news and information during a school trip. Photos taken on the phone for the purpose of sharing on Twitter will be deleted once they have been shared.
8. Individually targeted content will not be posted e.g. "Well done Josh a better lesson today". Tweets to a year group or class along the lines of "don't forget the..." are acceptable.
9. By endorsing twitter we may be encouraging children to use twitter so e-safety rules will be communicated at all times. Children will be made aware to: never tweet anything that would be potentially upsetting; make sure you know how to report to anything you find that disturbs you; be careful who you talk to they may not be all they appear; never meet anyone from twitter world without telling your parents.
10. Twitter's own rules and policies can be found here: <https://help.twitter.com/en/rules-and-policies#twitter-rules>

## **Appendix 2 - St James' C of E Twitter account: Guidelines for Parents and community members**

The school recognises that people using social networks (Users) will be able to engage with messages and posts produced by the school, on sites including Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. The following guidelines will be asked of Users:

- Users will not advertise products or services on school social media pages.
- Users will not post anything on school social media pages that could be deemed as offensive.
- Users will not engage in giving negative feedback on social media; it is more appropriate to deal with the school directly on such matters.
- Users will not mention individual staff members, parents or children in a negative light on school social media pages.
- Users will not ask to become “friends” with staff as failure to respond may cause offence.
- Users will not tag or post photographs of children on school social media pages.
- Users will not add comments that can identify children.

Inappropriate, harmful, or other comments/content which contravene these guidelines will be removed immediately where possible. Posts in contravention of social media sites' own rules will be reported.

*Facebook, Instagram and Twitter list a minimum age requirement of 13, and all Users are reminded that children under the age of 13 should not be on these social media platforms.*