



Social Networking Sites and Personal Internet Presence Policy for School Staff.

This policy is for Barleyhurst Park School and Barleyhurst Park Nursery.

Agreed by Governors: 19.10.2023

To be reviewed: Summer 2025

Introduction:

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance to school staff on the appropriate use of social networking sites. To protect the reputation of employees of the school and the school as a whole from intended or unintended abuse via personal employee usage of social networking and personal internet use.

The school recognizes that social media sites are increasingly useful communication tools and acknowledges the right of employees to freedom of expression. However, employees must be aware of the potential legal implications of material which could be considered abusive or defamatory and must, at all times, bear in mind the need to remain compliant with the school's code of conduct.

In addition, we are firmly committed to safeguarding children in all aspects of its work. The policy has been written to set out the key principles and code of conduct we expect from all members of staff with respect to their responsibilities in connection with the use of social networking sites.

Definition:

This policy applies to personal use of social networking sites (for example; Facebook, MySpace, X, MSN, Bebo, online discussion forums etc) personal web pages, personal space provided by internet providers and internet presence including blogs which make available personal views to the general public, including web pages or social media pages hosted by Milton Keynes Council which you are visiting as a personal user.

Although LinkedIn is not primarily a social networking site, employees should apply the principles set out within this policy to their use of this and similar professional networks.

Expectations:

All adults working with children have a responsibility to maintain public confidence in their ability to safeguard the welfare and best interests of children. It is therefore expected that they will adopt high standards of personal conduct in order to maintain the confidence and respect of their colleagues, children, public in general and all those with whom they work.

Anyone whose practice deviates from this policy and/or their professional or employment-related code of conduct may bring into question their suitability to work with children and young people and may result in disciplinary action being taken against them.

School staff should always maintain appropriate professional boundaries and avoid behaviour, during their use of the internet and other communication technologies, which might be misinterpreted by others.

Code of Conduct: Social Networking

The following are not considered acceptable at Barleyhurst Park Primary School:

- The use of the school's name, logo, or any other published material without written permission from the Headteacher.
- The posting of any communication or images which link the school to any form of illegal conduct, or which may damage the reputation of the school. This includes defamatory comments.



- The disclosure of confidential or business-sensitive information; or the disclosure of information or images that could compromise the security of the school.
- The posting of any images of employees, children, governors or anyone directly connected with the school whilst engaged in school activities.

Everyone at Barleyhurst must ensure they:

- Communicate with children and parents in an open and transparent way using the school phone number and email address.
- Never 'friend' a pupil at the school where they are working onto their social networking site.
- Do not make derogatory, defamatory, rude, threatening or inappropriate comments about the school, or anyone at or connected to the school.
- Use social networking sites responsibly and ensure that neither their personal nor professional reputation, nor the school's reputation, is compromised by inappropriate postings.
- Are aware of the potential of online identity fraud and to be cautious when giving out personal information about themselves which may compromise their personal safety and security.
- Make sure that high levels of privacy are set if they choose to use social media.
- Not use social networking sites for party political purposes.
- Check their online privacy settings and only allow "friends and family" to see their profiles and that the privacy settings of "friends and family" do not inadvertently allow access to the employee's own profile.

Potential and Actual Breaches of the Code of Conduct

Any breaches of this policy will be fully investigated. Where it is found that there has been a breach of the policy this may result in action being taken under the school's disciplinary procedures. A breach of this policy will be considered to be a serious disciplinary offence which is also contrary to the school's ethos and principles.

The Governing Board will take appropriate action in order to protect the school's reputation and that of its staff, parents, governors, children and anyone else directly linked to the school.

Whilst every attempt has been made to cover a wide range of situations, it is recognised that this policy cannot cover all eventualities. There may be times when professional judgements are made in situations not covered by this document, or which directly contravene the standards outlined in this document. It is expected that in these circumstances staff will advise the Headteacher of the justification for any such action already taken or proposed. The Headteacher will in turn seek advice from Human Resources where appropriate. This policy takes account of employment legislation and best practice guidelines in relation to social networking in addition to the legal obligations of governing bodies and the relevant legislation.

Safer Online Behaviour

Some social networking sites and other web-based sites have a space within the user profile for job title. Employees of a school should not put any information onto the site which could identify either their profession or the school where they work. It is in the staff's own interest to be aware of the dangers of putting personal information on to social networking sites. This will avoid the potential for children 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. All staff, particularly new staff, 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 the school if they are published outside of the site. 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, children or other individuals connected with the school, or another school could result in formal action being taken against them. This includes the uploading of photographs which might put the school into disrepute.

Mobile Phones/Camera/Video Recorder Usage

- Apart from SLT, all mobile phones must be kept in a secure location (not in a pocket), switched off and not be accessed throughout contact time with the children.
- In exceptional circumstances, which have been discussed and agreed with a member of the leadership team, staff may keep their phone switched on and accessible as long as they use their phone out of the view of children.
- During school visits mobile phones should only be used to contact the school and for emergency use only.
- Photographs or images of any children within our care may only be taken following parental consent and only using one of the school cameras/ipads. These images should remain within this setting and only shared with consent of the parent/carer.
- Personal mobiles, cameras or video recorder cannot be used to record classroom activities - only school property can be used for this.
- School photographs and recordings can only be transferred to, and stored on a school computer.

Protection of Personal Information

Staff should not give their personal email address to children or parents. Where there is a need for communication to be sent electronically the school email address should be used. Like-wise, staff should keep their personal phone numbers private and not use their own mobile phones to contact parents in a professional capacity unless there has been an agreement put in place due to a pupil's complex medical needs. There will be occasions when there are social contacts between children and staff, where for example the parent and staff member are part of the same social circle or community group. Communications with these people will not include any communication relating to school/work.

Access to Inappropriate Images and Internet Usage

There are no circumstances that will justify adults possessing indecent images of children. Staff who access and possess links to such websites will be viewed as a significant and potential threat to children. Accessing, making and storing indecent images of children are illegal. This will lead to a criminal investigation and the individual being barred from working with children, if proven.

Cyber-bullying

In order to reduce the potential for cyber-bullying, children who bring a phone into school should hand it in to the class teacher who will securely store it until the end of the school day.