



Macosquin Primary School



Social Media Policy

MACOSQUIN SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY INTRODUCTION

As a school we wish to uphold a positive image with all stakeholders; pupils, staff, parents, governors and community members. (For the purposes of this policy, the aforementioned individuals will be referred to collectively as 'school community members').

We strive at all times to create an environment where there is mutual respect, where each person is valued as an individual and pastoral care is an integral part of education.

We recognise the importance of ICT in allowing all pupils to gain confidence and ability in an ever-changing society and that it prepares them for the challenge of a rapidly developing and evolving technological world. Our school strives to provide opportunities to enable all our staff, pupils and parents to be safe, confident, competent and independent users of ICT.

Social networking is everywhere. It is common to find parents, children, co-workers and others on such sites. Examples of these sites include, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, MySpace, Bebo etc. With social networks people across the world have access to tools and options that were previously non-existent.

However, there are now just as many new opportunities to connect as there are to get into potential danger. Users often forget that while they are having fun on social networks, almost anybody can see what they are doing. While a user tags photos of friends or is posting comments to them, it can be easy to forget that someone else who has been invited onto a social networking site can also view them. Often there is a minimal amount of control over who ultimately gets to see a post. Once something appears on the Internet, it's almost impossible to remove.

As these sites continue to grow in popularity, so too does the value of the information on them to parties other than those directly involved. Social networking users need to take a step back and think about just what they are posting onto the Internet as it can have serious ramifications. Content can include unacceptable and/or threatening comments about other pupils and/or staff which are serious enough to threaten physical and emotional damage. Our school will not tolerate such behaviour.

This policy serves to convey the guidelines which members of our school community should operate within. We recognise that as a school we hold no jurisdiction in policing social media platforms, but urge the whole school community to work collaboratively to communicate appropriately.

As educators, we believe that the partnership of parent and school is intrinsic to realising the best educational outcomes for our pupils. This policy outlines the context of social media and the responsibilities that staff and parents have in role-modeling effective and safe communication on social media.

Other Relevant Policies

The school recognises the integral nature of online safety in the following policies:

- Positive Behaviour Management Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Use of Mobile Phones Policy
- E-Safety Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct

These policies are available to parents through the school website and the school office.

Responsibilities of Staff

People who work with children and young people should always maintain appropriate professional boundaries, avoid improper contact or relationships and respect their position of trust. With regard to relationships, individuals who work with children and young people should not attempt to establish a relationship, which might include:

- communication of a personal nature;
- inappropriate dialogue through the internet;
- sharing of personal contact details including email address, online identity or phone number; and
- the sending of emails or text messages of an inappropriate nature.

Individuals, who work with children and young people, should be extremely careful in corresponding with people on social networking sites. Staff relationships with children and young people should, at all times, remain professional and they should not correspond with children and young people through such sites or add them as 'friends'.

It is worth bearing in mind that, on such sites, an inappropriate or even misconstrued communication may have the potential to impact upon their careers, or even result in criminal investigation.

In addition staff should bear in mind who may access their own profiles on such websites. Staff should adhere and take notice of the following:

- They should take care as to the information they display about themselves, their personal lives and should not make any reference to school or individuals within it.
- They should not disclose on their online profile, 'where they work', and at no time should they post anything of a lewd/explicit/racist/discriminatory etc. nature or any other action which is capable of bringing the school into disrepute.
- They should also ensure that they have installed, and are using, the highest level of privacy settings.
- Staff should not form online friendships or enter into communication with parents/carers as this could lead to professional relationships being compromised.

- They should not enter into online friendships or online communication with pupils as this could lead to professional relationships being compromised, and/or safeguarding allegations being raised.
- Staff should not post any images of employees, children, governors or anyone directly connected with the school whilst engaged in school activities without prior permission from the Principal.
- Before posting any images of school community members taken at events not related to school, for example at social events, permission should be directly sought from the parties involved..
- Individuals, who work with children and young people, should not make, view or access illegal or inappropriate images of children.
- They should exercise caution when using social networking sites and avoid inappropriate communication of any kind.
- That if their use of social media/networking sites contravenes this policy, they may be subject to disciplinary action.

Responsibilities of Parents and Guardians

Parents and Guardians will be made aware of their responsibilities regarding their use of social networking by the school. They will receive a copy of this policy, distributed each academic year. Methods of school communication include the prospectus, the website, weekly updates, seesaw notices, letters and verbal discussion.

Parents must adhere and bear in mind the following:

- Pictures taken of pupils within the school setting/at school events should not be posted on social networking sites without parents' permission.
- Before posting any images of school community members, taken at events, not related to school, for example at social events, permission should be directly sought from the parties involved.
- Furthermore, parents should report any incidents of cyber bullying (and/or bullying) as soon as they are discovered.
- Complaints made in public through social media are detrimental and could be damaging to the school community and as such are not beneficial to the children. Parents/carers should bear this in mind before publishing such complaints online.
- Any complaints, should they arise, should be pursued through the appropriate channels by making contact with the member of staff involved, the Vice Principal or the Principal. A meeting can then be arranged at a mutually convenient time to bring about a resolution to the issue.
- Parents/ carers should also be aware that defamatory comments are unlawful and may result in legal action.
- Parents should be role models for their young children on how to behave and comment online.

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. http://www.facebook.com/help/contact.php?show_form=underage

Guidance/Protection for the School Community

Any breaches of this policy will be fully investigated. Where it is found that there has been a breach of policy and depending on those involved, this may result in appropriate action being taken in accordance with the following:

- EANI Disciplinary Procedures
- Formal letter to parents
- Report to EANI Legal Branch
- Report to PSNI

The Board of Governors 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 with Macosquin Primary School.