**CHURCHILL PRIMARY SCHOOL**

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**Use of Social Media Policy**

Updated January 2024

**Mission Statement**

As a school, we wish to uphold a positive image with all stakeholders; pupils, staff, parents, governors and community members. We strive 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. Each pupil will be encouraged to fulfil his or her moral, intellectual, spiritual, physical, social, aesthetic and emotional potential.

Churchill Primary School recognises that many staff, governors, parents, carers and pupils use the internet for personal purposes and that they may participate in social networking on sites such as Facebook, Snapchat, X (formally Twitter), YouTube, Tik Tok, WhatsApp and through gaming forums etc. In addition, staff, governors, parents and carers may set up personal weblogs or “blogs” on the internet.

Whilst staff, governors, parents and carers are free to use the internet in this way, they must ensure that they do not breach the law or disclose Churchill Primary School’s confidential information, breach copyright, defame the school, its staff, governors, parents, carers or pupils. They must not disclose personal data or information about any individual that could breach the Data Protection Act 1998, GDPR, 2018 or the school’s online safety policy.

They should keep completely confidential, any information regarding the children, their families or other staff which is learned through the school.

The purpose of this policy is to outline the responsibilities of staff, governors, parents and carers setting up personal websites and blogs and using social networking websites.

This policy relates to material posted on public areas and those restricted to certain individuals.

**Social Networking**

**Social Media Definition**

Social media technologies take on many different forms including magazines, Internet forums (message boards), weblogs (blogs), microblogging (Twitter, Reddit), social networks (Facebook, Twitter, Myspace, etc.), podcasts, photographs or pictures, video and virtual game worlds.

**Objectives**

The purpose of this policy is to:

* Encourage social networking sites to be used in a beneficial and positive way by all members of the wider school community;
* Safeguard pupils, staff and anyone associated with the school from the negative effects of social networking sites;
* Safeguard the reputation of the school from unwarranted abuse on social networking sites;
* Clarify what the school considers to be appropriate and inappropriate use of social networking sites by the wider school community;
* Set out the procedures the school will follow where it is considered that members of the wider school community have inappropriately or unlawfully used social networking sites to the detriment of the school, staff, pupils or anyone else associated with the school;
* Set out the action the school will consider taking if a member of the wider school community makes inappropriate use of social networking sites.

The internet is a fast-moving technology and it is impossible to cover all circumstances or be aware of all the latest forums of emerging media and platforms. This policy covers the use of existing and any future social networking platforms.

**Guidelines for pupils**

Our guiding principle is ***“respect for yourself and consideration for others.”***

* Pupils must not use social media, messaging platforms and the internet in any way to attack, insult, abuse or defame other pupils or any member of staff.
* Pupils must not use social media in a way that brings disrespect to our school.
* Photographs, videos or any image of pupils, staff or any member of our school community must not be published on a personal or public web space without prior permission from the school.
* Pupils and the wider school community should not post images or videos from school trips on any social media site.
* Social network sites should never be accessed within school.

Failure to follow these guidelines may result in disciplinary action, suspension and possible exclusion from Churchill Primary School.

**Guidelines for Staff of Churchill Primary School**

It is possible that many staff will have their own social networking site accounts. It is important for them to protect their professional reputation by ensuring that they use their personal accounts in an appropriate manner:

* Staff must not use social networking sites within lesson times (for personal use).
* Staff should not comment on any posts made by or about the school, pupils, parents or colleagues including members of the Governing Body, unless in a positive manner on the school Facebook page.
* Staff should not name pupils on social media or leave comments under photographs on the school’s social media pages naming pupils.
* Staff are strongly **advised** not to add parents/carers as ‘friends’ into their personal accounts. There may be a conflict of interest and security and privacy issues, but where relationships are already established, staff should proceed with caution, being fully aware of the social media guidelines and the teacher’s code of conduct
* Staff should not accept friend requests from current or past pupils of Churchill Primary School (past pupil under the age of 18) under any circumstances.
* Staff should review and adjust their privacy settings to give them the appropriate level of privacy and confidentiality.
* Staff should not share personal conversations.
* Staff should never disclose sensitive, private or confidential information across private messaging.
* Staff should behave respectfully and should not ‘like’, ‘share’ or ‘follow’ or engage in topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory e.g. politics or religion, gender, sexuality etc., which could result in their professional reputation being compromised.

Inappropriate use by staff should be referred to the Principal in the first instance and may lead to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

**Guidelines for Parents / Guardians / Carers / Governors**

Parents / Guardians / Carers / Governors should be aware of their responsibilities regarding the use of social networking:

* Do not include personal information, including photographs about an individual without his/her consent, otherwise they risk breaching the Data Protection Act 1998 and GDPR regulations which is a criminal offence.
* Complaints should be made through the official school channels rather that posting them on social networking sites which can be detrimental and possibly damaging to the school community and, as such, are not beneficial to the children.
* Do not include material that is negative, abusive, defamatory, sexist, sectarian, racist or that could be interpreted as harassment or bullying about any member of the school community or any school policy, process or procedure.
* Malicious or inappropriate comments will be reported and may result in accounts being removed. Fictitious and defamatory comments may also result in legal action.
  + Action will also be taken if any inappropriate comments are made in which a member of the school community can be identified from the content of the comment.

The Board of Governors of Churchill Primary School will take appropriate action in order to protect the school’s reputation and that of its staff, pupils and parents / guardians / carers, governors, and anyone else directly linked to Churchill Primary School. Where appropriate, comments will be reported to the PSNI.

To support the pupils of Churchill Primary School and using guidance from the Department of Education, the Education Authority and outside agencies, members of staff will give clarity to pupils and parents / guardian / carers about the acceptable use of the internet and mobile devices by children whilst in Churchill Primary School.

Parents / Guardians / Carers have full responsibility for their child’s use of the internet, mobile devices and social networks outside of school.

It is expected that parents/carers/guardians explain to their children what is acceptable to post online. Parents/carers/guardians are also expected to monitor their children’s online activity, particularly in relation to their use of social media.

**Guidance / protection for pupils on using social networking**

Nearly all social networking sites only allow users aged **13 and over**. You can find more information and guidance on any social network at **https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/**

There is a mechanism on Facebook, where pupils can be reported via the Help screen or by accessing the link below.

<https://www.facebook.com/help/contact/209046679279097>

**Churchill Primary School**

**Safeguarding and Child Protection Code of Conduct regarding the Use of Social Media**

***This Code of Conduct applies to everyone within our school community.***

**Safeguarding and Child Protection is a key responsibility for everyone within our school community. An increasingly important aspect of Safeguarding and Child Protection concerns our use of social media. Below is a ‘Code of Conduct regarding the Use of Social Media’ that we expect all members of the school community (children, parents, staff, governors and all regular visitors) to adhere to.**

**All online communications regarding the school are to be transparent and open to scrutiny. The Board of Governors will take appropriate action to ensure the safety and security of those within the school community and to protect the school’s reputation. Any breaches of this ‘Code of Conduct’ will be fully investigated.**

1. When using social media everyone has a responsibility to treat others within the school community with respect. Individuals must not make any derogatory, defamatory, rude, threatening or inappropriate comments about anyone connected to the school. Offensive language should not be used.
2. There must not be any postings on social media that links the school to any form of illegal conduct or which might damage the reputation of the school.
3. Confidential information regarding anyone within the school community must not be posted online. In relation to specific school activities, personal contact details including email addresses, home or mobile telephone numbers must not be made available online unless this has been agreed with the Principal.
4. Photographs or video clips of children completing activities in school must not be posted on social media by parents or children without the permission of the Principal.
5. The school’s name, logo or documents must not be posted online without the permission of the Principal.
6. Messages that compromise the security of the school premises must not be posted online.
7. Where images or video clips of children are posted on the school website or other online facility endorsed by the school, the names of the children will not be provided.
8. Parents are responsible for their children’s use of social media outside of school. They should be aware of the age restrictions regarding particular forms of social media, for example, Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook, Tik Tok and WhatsApp state clearly that their registered users should be at least 13 years of age.
9. Social media sites should be set as ‘Private’ and children must not be listed as approved contacts.
10. Staff or volunteers working in the school must not use social media to communicate directly with children who attend the school. Communication will only be through apps/sites/email approved by the principal for the purposes of home learning.
11. Staff must not use school ICT equipment to use social media without the permission of the Principal.
12. Please note that this ‘Code of Conduct’ is part of the school’s wider ‘e-Safety Policy’.