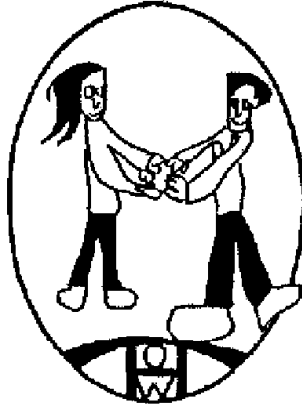


Howbridge Infant School



Social Networking Policy

Date last reviewed by Governing Body: January 2025

Introduction

The widespread availability and use of social networking applications bring opportunities to understand, engage and communicate with our audiences in new and exciting ways. It is important that we are able to use these technologies and services effectively and flexibly. However, it is also important to ensure that we balance this with our duties to our School Community and partners, our legal responsibilities and our reputation. For example, our use of social networking applications has implications for our duty to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults.

The policy requirements in this document aim to provide this balance to support innovation and schools of the 21st Century, whilst providing a framework of good practice. They apply to all members as defined by school representatives.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure:

- That Howbridge Infant School, its leaders and governors are not exposed to legal risks
- That the reputation of Howbridge Infant School, staff and governors at the school are not adversely affected
- All children are safeguarded
- That any users are able to clearly distinguish where information provided via social networking applications is legitimately representative of Howbridge Infant School

Scope

This policy covers the use of social networking applications by School Employees, governors and/or Elected Members and by partners or other third parties on behalf of the school. These groups are referred to collectively as 'School representatives' for the purpose of this policy. The requirements of this policy apply to all uses of social networking applications which are used for any school or Local Authority related purpose and regardless of whether the applications are hosted corporately or not. They must also be considered where School representatives are contributing in an official capacity to social networking applications provided by external organisations.

Social networking applications include, but are not limited to:

- Blogs
- Online discussion forums
- Collaborative spaces
- Media sharing services
- Micro-blogging applications

Examples of these may include Facebook, X (Twitter), MSN, You Tube, Instagram, Whatsapp etc.

Many of the principles of this policy also apply to other types of online presence such as virtual worlds.

All school representatives should bear in mind that information they share through social networking applications, even if they are on private spaces, are still subject to copyright, data protection and freedom of information legislation. They must also operate in line with the School and Local Authority Equality and Safeguarding Policies.

School staff will not engage in any communication with parents or children on any social networking sites regarding any school matters whilst in employment at the school.

Any communication received from children to school representatives must be immediately reported to the Head Teacher, Designated Child Protection Officer and procedures for safeguarding followed.

If a School Representative is made aware of any other inappropriate communications involving any child and social networking, these must be reported immediately as above. The School Internet and E-Safety policy must be used at all times when children use ICT and access the internet in school.

Enforcement

Any breach of the terms set out below could result in the application or offending content being removed in accordance with the published complaints procedure and the publishing rights of the responsible School representative being suspended.

The Local Authority reserves the right to require the closure of any applications or removal of content published by School representatives which may adversely affect the reputation of the School or put it at risk of legal action.

Any communications or content you publish that causes damage to the school, Local Authority, any of its employees or any third party's reputation may amount to misconduct or gross misconduct to which the School and Local Authority Dismissal and Disciplinary Policies apply.

Where applications allow the posting of messages online, users must be mindful that the right of freedom of expression attaches only to lawful conduct.

The Local Authority expects that users of social networking applications will always exercise the right of freedom of expression with due consideration for the rights of others and strictly in accordance with these Terms of Use.

Related Documents

Complaints Procedure
Safeguarding and Child Protection Policies
Equality and Diversity Policy
Internet and E-Safety Policy
Privacy Notices
Confidentiality Statement