



Caldecote Primary School

Social Networking Policy

March 2024

1. Introduction

The school is aware and acknowledges that increasing numbers of adults and children are using social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat. The widespread availability and use of social networking applications brings opportunities to understand, engage and communicate with audiences in new 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 the reputation of Caldecote Primary School and its staff and stakeholders.

It must be remembered that any published statements to a third party can be deemed as defamatory. This is regardless of whether such statements are to a single person or a whole group, or if they were posted on a 'private' profile webspace. All that is required for a statement to be considered defamatory is that comments are derogatory and published to at least one person.

Our use of social networking applications has implications for our duty to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults. This policy and associated guidance is to protect staff and to provide guidance on how to deal with potential inappropriate use of social networking sites.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure:

- that the school is not exposed to legal risks
- that the reputation of the school is not adversely affected
- that our users are able to clearly distinguish where information provided via social networking applications is legitimately representative of the school.

This policy covers the use of social networking applications by all school stakeholders, including, employees, governors, PTA and pupils. The requirements of this policy apply to all uses of social networking applications which are used for any school related purpose and regardless of whether the school stakeholders are contributing in an official capacity to social networking applications provided by external organisations.

Social networking is defined as the activity of sharing information and communicating with groups of people using the internet, especially through websites and applications that are designed for this purpose. This policy refers to all social network websites and applications.

All school stakeholders 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, the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 and other legislation. They must also operate in line with the School's Equality and Diversity Policy.

Use of Social networking sites in Worktime

Use of social networking applications in work time for personal use only is not permitted, unless permission has been given by the Headteachers.

Social Networking as part of School Service

All proposals for using social networking applications as part of a school service (whether they are hosted by the school or by a third party) must be approved by the Headteachers first.

Use of social networking applications which are not related to any school services (for example, contributing to a wiki provided by a professional association) does not need to be approved by the Headteachers. However, school stakeholders must still operate in line with the requirements set out within the policy

School stakeholders must adhere to the following Terms of Use. This includes, but is not limited to, public facing applications such as open discussion forums and internally-facing uses such as project blogs, regardless of whether they are hosted on a school network or not.

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

3. Terms of Use

Social Networking applications:

- Must not be used to publish any content which may result in actions for defamation, discrimination, breaches of copyright, data protection or other claim for damages. This includes but is not limited to material of an illegal, sexual or offensive nature that may bring the school into disrepute.
- Must not be used for the promotion of personal financial interests, commercial ventures or personal campaigns
- Must not be used in an abusive or hateful manner
- Must not be used for actions that would put school stakeholders in breach of school codes of conduct or policies relating to staff.
- Must not breach the school's Discipline & Dismissal, Equality & Diversity, Employment or Persistent Complaints & Harrassment policies
- Must not be used to discuss or advise any issues relating to school matters, staff, pupils or parents
- No staff member should have a pupil or former pupil under the age of 18 as a 'friend' to share information with
- Employees should not identify themselves as a representative of the school
- References should not be made to any staff member, pupil, parent or school activity / event unless prior permission has been obtained and agreed with the Headteachers
- Staff should be aware that if their out-of-work activity causes potential embarrassment for the employer or detrimentally affects the employee or employer's reputation, then the employer is entitled to take disciplinary action

Violation of this policy will be considered as gross misconduct and can result in disciplinary action being taken against the employee up to and including termination of employment.

4. Guidance/protection for staff on using social networking

- No member of staff should interact with any pupil in the school on social networking sites
- No member of staff should interact with any ex-pupil in the school on social networking sites who is under the age of 18. This means that no member of the school staff should request access to a pupil's area on the social networking site. Neither should they permit the pupil access to the staff members' area e.g. by accepting them as a friend
- Where family and friends have pupils in school and there are legitimate family links, please inform the Headteachers in writing. However, it would not be appropriate to network during the working day on school equipment
- It is illegal for an adult to network, giving their age and status as a child
- Staff members should proceed with caution when interacting with parents on social networking sites; staff members are deemed to be school representatives and may be at risk of bringing the school into disrepute
- Mobile phones should be switched to silent during the school day
- Mobile phones should only be accessible if being used for school business eg to Tweet (see Mobile device policy)

If you have any evidence of pupils or adults using social networking sites in the working day, please contact the Designated Child Protection officer.

5. Guidance/protection for pupils on using social networking

- No pupil under 13 should be accessing social networking sites which include but not exclusive of Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Tiktok, Twitter and Wink. This is the guidance from NSPCC. <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/social-media/>
- No pupil under the age of 16 should be accessing WhatsApp.
- No pupil should access social networking sites during the school working day
- Pupils must not make inappropriate comments (including in private messages) about the school, its staff or other children.
- No pupils should have mobile phones in school unless they have permission from the Headteachers. If permission is granted, phones must be handed into the school office at the beginning of the school day and collected at the end. The internet capability must be switched off and the phone must be on silent. Failure to follow this guidance will result in a total ban for the pupil using a mobile phone
- No pupil should attempt to join a staff member's area on networking sites. If pupils attempt to do this, the member of staff must inform the Headteachers. Parents will be informed if this happens
- No school computers are to be used to access social networking sites at any time of day
- Any attempts to breach firewalls will result in a ban from using school ICT equipment other than with close supervision
- Caldecote School has a zero tolerance of cyber bullying; any improper contact or cyber bullying should be reported to your class teacher, in confidence, as soon as it happens.

6. Safeguarding guidance

If the Headteachers receives a disclosure that an adult employed by the school is using a social networking site in an inappropriate manner as detailed above, they should:

- Record the disclosure in line with their child protection policy
- Follow the County's reporting procedure and seek advice from the County Safeguarding team

- Follow the advice of the team, keeping detailed records of actions / conversations throughout

7. Cyber Bullying

By adopting the recommended 'No use of social networking sites on school premises', Caldecote Primary School protects themselves from accusations of complicity in any cyber bullying through the provision of access. Parents should be aware of the policy which should be accessible on the school website.

Where a disclosure of bullying is made, schools have a legal duty to investigate the disclosure and protect children, even where the bullying originates outside the school.

Examples of this type of cyber bullying are:

A child receiving taunts on Facebook and texts from an ex pupil who moved three months ago: *This is not a school responsibility, although the school may contact the new school to broker a resolution.*

A child receiving taunts from peers at weekends using MSN and Facebook. The pupils are in the school:

The school has a duty of care to investigate and work with the families, as they attend the school. If parents are aware of the activity, they are condoning the use of Facebook outside the terms and conditions of the site and the school should make it clear that they are expected to ensure that the use of the site stops.

If the issue is of a safeguarding nature, it should be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) who will take the appropriate action under the Child Protection Policy.

If parent / carers refuse to engage and bullying continues, it can be referred to the police as harassment.

This guidance can also apply to text and mobile phone cyber bullying.

Staff conduct regular education and discussion about e-safety as part of computing and PSHE in order to prevent cyberbullying.

8. Comments Posted by Parents/Carers

Parents and carers should be aware of their responsibilities with regard to using social networking and their signed agreement to abide by school policies (via Home/School Agreement).

Parents must not post pictures of pupils, other than their own children on social networking sites where these photographs have been taken at a school event.

Parents must not access social media on their own devices while on school premises or whilst on a school trip.

Parents should not post comments on social networking sites that could be deemed defamatory or damaging to the reputation of the school. Parents should use the official channels of communication if they have a complaint or an issue they are unhappy about. These channels include:

- Speaking, emailing or writing to a class teacher, key stage leader, deputy or head teacher
- Raising the issue via the Parent Forum
- Using the school Complaints Procedure (on website)

Parents/carers should not post anonymously or under an alias to evade the guidance given in this policy.

9. Policy Review

The Policy statement will be reviewed in line with the rolling programme of Policy reviews.

Headteachers: Date:

Chair of Governors: Date: