



# **St Winefride's Catholic Primary School**

## **Social Media Policy for Staff, Governors, Children and Parent/Carers**

St. Winefride’s Catholic Primary School Social Media Policy for Staff, Governors,  
Children and Parent/Carers

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## **Mission Statement**

St Winefride's is a Catholic Primary School where our mission statement underpins every aspect of school life.

**We celebrate God's love for everyone. We enjoy learning and growing together in our caring and welcoming family.**

*Jesus said, "Let the children come to me."*

*Matthew 19:14*

## **Introduction**

St Winefride's Catholic Primary School (the School) is aware and recognises that increasing numbers of adults and children are using social media and networking sites (social media). The two, currently, with the widest use are Facebook and Twitter. The widespread availability and use of social media applications bring 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 our reputation. This policy and associated guidance is to protect staff and advise the School Leadership Team (SLT) on how to deal with potential inappropriate use of social media. For example, our use of social media 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 whilst providing a framework of good practice.

## **Purpose of the Policy**

The purpose of this policy is to ensure:

- That our duty to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults is always at the forefront of our minds.
- That the school community are able to clearly distinguish where information provided via social media is legitimately representative of the school.
- That the school and its members of staff and children are not exposed to legal risks.
- That the reputation of the school is not adversely affected.

## **Scope**

This policy covers the use of social media by all school stakeholders, including, governors, staff, pupils and parents/carers. These groups are referred to collectively as 'School Stakeholders' for brevity.

The requirements of this policy apply to all uses of social media which are used for any school related purpose and regardless of whether the School Stakeholders

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are contributing in an official capacity to social media provided by external organisations.

Social media applications include, but are not limited to:

Blogs, for example Blogger.

Online discussion forums, such as netmums.com.

Collaborative spaces, such as Facebook.

Media sharing services, for example YouTube.

'Micro-blogging' applications, for example Twitter.

Games sites, for example Minecraft, Roblox etc.

Interactive console games, for example Call of Duty, FIFA 2018 etc.

All School Stakeholders should bear in mind that information they share through social media 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 Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, the Use of digital images - photography and video policy, The Online Safety Agreement, the Acceptable Use of Computing Equipment policy and the Online Safety Policy.

### **Use of Social Media in School Time**

Use of social media in work time, by staff (including governors), for personal use only is not permitted, unless permission has been given by the Headteacher. Children should not access social media under any circumstances whilst at school; if they do bring a mobile phone to school it should be handed in to their class teacher as soon as they arrive at school. It will be returned at the end of the school day. Parent/carers should refrain from using their mobile phones for any purpose whilst in the school building (including the playground) due to safeguarding concerns and in line with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and the Use of Mobile Phones in School Policy.

### **Social Media as Part of School Service**

All proposals for using social media as part of a school service (whether they are hosted by the school or by a third party) must be approved by the Headteacher or a member of the SLT first.

Uses of social media 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 Headteacher. However, School Stakeholders must still operate in line with the requirements set out within this policy. School Stakeholders must adhere to the following Terms of Use.

## Terms of Use<sup>1</sup>

Social Media 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 representatives in breach of school codes of conduct or policies relating to staff.
- Must not breach the school's Code of Conduct, Equal Opportunities or Anti-bullying policies.
- Must not be used to discuss or advise any matters 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 Headteacher.
- Staff should be aware that if their out-of-work activity causes potential embarrassment for the employer or detrimentally effects the 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.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Terms of Use apply to all uses of social media applications by all School Stakeholders. 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 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. St Winefride's Catholic Primary School expects that users of social media 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.*

## **Guidance and Protection for Staff on Using Social Media**

It is possible that a high proportion of 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.

Accordingly:

No member of staff should interact with any pupil of the school on social media.

No member of staff should interact with any ex-pupil of the school on social media 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 media site. Neither should they permit the pupil access to the staff members' area e.g. by accepting them as a friend.

Staff are strongly advised not to add parents of pupils at the school as 'friends' to a social media site.

Where family and friends have pupils in school and there are legitimate family links, please inform the Headteacher in writing. However, it would not be appropriate to network during the working day on school equipment.

Staff should only use social media in a way that does not conflict with the current National Teacher's Standards.

Staff must not post comments about the school, pupils, parents or colleagues including members of the Governing Board.

Staff should review and adjust their privacy settings to give them the appropriate level of privacy and confidentiality.

Inappropriate use by staff should be referred to the Headteacher in the first instance and may lead to disciplinary action being taken against the member of staff, up to and including termination of employment.

It is illegal for an adult to network, giving their age and status as a child.

If you have any evidence of pupils or adults using social media sites in the working day, please contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead<sup>2</sup> in school.

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<sup>2</sup> *The Designated Safeguarding Leads are: Mrs Sheila Britton, Mr Paul Underwood and Mrs Nicola Brosnan.*

## **Guidance and Protection for Governors and Other Volunteers on Using Social Media**

It is possible that a high proportion of Governors and volunteers will have their own social networking site accounts. It is important for them to protect their professional reputation and that of the school by ensuring that they use their personal accounts in an appropriate manner.

Accordingly:

No Governor or volunteer should interact with any pupil of the school on social media.

No Governor or volunteer should interact with any ex-pupil of the school on social media sites who is under the age of 18.

This means that no Governor or volunteer should request access to a pupil's area on the social media site. Neither should they permit the pupil access to the staff members' area e.g. by accepting them as a friend.

Governors and/or volunteers are strongly advised not to add parents of pupils at the school as 'friends' to a social media site.

Where family and friends have pupils in school and there are legitimate family links, please inform the Headteacher in writing. However, it would not be appropriate to network during the working day on school equipment.

Governors and/or volunteers must not post comments about the school, pupils, parents or colleagues including members of the Governing Board.

Governors and/or volunteers should review and adjust their privacy settings to give them the appropriate level of privacy and confidentiality.

Inappropriate use by Governors and/or volunteers should be referred to the Headteacher in the first instance.

It is illegal for an adult to network, giving their age and status as a child.

If you have any evidence of pupils or adults using social media sites in the working day, please contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead<sup>3</sup> in school.

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<sup>3</sup> *The Designated Safeguarding Leads are: Mrs Sheila Britton, Mr Paul Underwood and Mrs Nicola Brosnan.*

## **Guidance and Protection for Pupils on Using Social Media**

No pupil under 13 should be accessing social media sites. (See notes on Age Guidelines below)

There is a mechanism on Facebook where pupils can be reported via the Help screen; at the time of writing this policy the direct link for this is: [http://www.facebook.com/help/contact.php?show\\_form=underage](http://www.facebook.com/help/contact.php?show_form=underage)

No pupil may access social media sites during the school working day.

All pupil mobile phones must be handed into the office at the beginning of the school day, the internet capability must be switched off. Failure to follow this guidance will result in a total ban for the student bringing a mobile phone to school.

Any pupil found using a mobile phone during school time will have the mobile phone confiscated and their parent/carer will be required to come into school to collect the phone from a member of the SLT.

No pupil should attempt to join a staff member's area on social media (i.e. send a friend request etc.). If a pupil attempts to do this, the member of staff is to inform the Headteacher immediately. Parents will also be informed if this happens.

No school computers are to be used to access social media sites at any time of day unless for direct school use (e.g. posting school information on a school social media page).

Any attempts to breach firewalls or LGfL's filtering system will result in a ban from using school computing equipment other than under close supervision.

Please report any improper contact or cyber bullying to the class teacher in confidence as soon as it happens.

We have a zero tolerance to cyber bullying (see below).

## Guidance for Parent/carers on Using Social Media

Parent/carers should take great care in their use of social media. They should be aware of the minimum age limits of social media sites and not allow their children to access them freely in contravention of these age limits.

Parent/carers are advised that it is best practice to never allow their children unrestricted internet access and should take steps to ensure their children do not have access to inappropriate sites. There are many suitable parental controls available free of charge and we strongly recommend that these are used to block unsuitable websites and applications. Ideally children should always be in the same room as a responsible adult while accessing social media and when playing interactive games that have access to the internet and enable communication between players.

It cannot be stressed strongly enough how important it is to teach your children that they have ***No way of telling if the person they are interacting with online is actually who they say they are!***

Parent/carers are strongly advised not to add members of the school staff as 'friends' to a social media site.

Parent/carers should not post pictures, videos etc. of children (other than their own child) from the school, to any social media site, where these photographs have been taken at a school event.

Parent/carers should not post comments about the school, staff, governors, pupils or other parent/carers that are in contravention of this policy.

Parent/carers should make complaints through official school channels rather than posting them on social media sites.

Parent/carers should not post malicious or fictitious comments on social media sites about the school or any member of the school community.

Parent/carers should review and adjust their privacy settings to give them the appropriate level of privacy and confidentiality.

Parent/carers should report any concerns regarding social media posts involving the school or its stakeholders to the school as soon as is reasonably practical.

Parent/carers should ensure that their children only play age appropriate video games etc. Parent/carers may find the Pan European Game Information (PEGI) rating on the packaging of the video game. This is especially important in the case of games that have an internet option. If a child is playing a PEGI 18+ game anyone interacting with them may, rightly, assume that the player is over 18. This, obviously, has the likelihood of causing major safeguarding concerns, for both the child and their parents. It is in everyone's best interest that parent/carers are able to see and hear everything that their child is doing online, even if they are simply playing a game.

## **Child Protection Guidance**

If the Headteacher receives a disclosure that a member of staff is using a Social Media site in an inappropriate manner as detailed above they should:

Record the disclosure in line with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Refer the matter to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) who will investigate via the London Borough of Newham Police Child Protection Team.

If the disclosure has come from a parent, take normal steps to reassure the parent and explain processes.

If disclosure comes from a member of staff, take all steps to maintain confidentiality and follow the above steps.

If disclosure is from a child, follow the normal process in the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy until the police investigation has been carried out.

The LADO will advise whether the member of staff should be suspended pending investigation after contact with the police. It is not recommended that action is taken until advice has been given.

## **Cyber Bullying and Inappropriate Use of Social Media**

By adopting the above policy of not allowing any use of social media sites on school premises (except on official school media applications, should they exist), St Winefride's Catholic Primary School, protects themselves from accusations of complicity in any cyber bullying through the provision of access.

Parent/carers should be clearly aware of the school's policy of access to social media sites.

Where a disclosure of bullying is made, schools now have the duty to investigate and protect, even where the bullying originates from outside the school. This can be a complex area, and these examples might help:

- A child is receiving taunts online and by text from an ex-pupil who left the school for another three months ago: This is not a school responsibility, though the school would contact the new school to broker a resolution.
- A child is receiving taunts from peers. It is all at weekends using texts. 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.
- A child is receiving taunts from peers. It is all at weekends using Facebook (or another Social Media application), the pupils are in Y5: This is a difficult situation to resolve. The school has a duty of care to investigate and work with the families, as they attend the school. However, the school are also fully within their rights to warn all the parents (including those of the victim) that they are condoning the use of Facebook outside the terms and conditions of the site and that they are expected to ensure that use of the site stops. At any further referral to the school, we could legitimately say that the victims and perpetrators had failed to follow the school's

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recommendation. We could then deal with residual bullying in the school, but refuse to deal with the social media issues.

- Once a disclosure is made, an investigation will have to involve the families. This should be dealt with under the school's anti bullying 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, and via use of apps such as WhatsApp, Snapchat etc. and also through online forums and interactive games played via games consoles.

In the case of inappropriate use of social media and/or malicious, fictitious or defamatory remarks or comments posted on social media by parent/carers the Governing Board of St Winefride's will contact the parent/carer asking them to remove such comments and seek redress through the appropriate channels.

The Governing Board understand that, "There are circumstances in which police involvement is appropriate. These include where postings have a racist element or where violence is threatened or encouraged." Furthermore, "Laws of defamation and privacy still apply to the web and it is unlawful for statements to be written, which:

- expose (an individual) to hatred, ridicule or contempt,
- cause (an individual) to be shunned or avoided,
- lower (an individual's) standing in the estimation of right-thinking members of society or
- disparage (an individual in their) business, trade, office or profession."

(National Association of Headteachers)

## Age Guidelines for Using Social Media

In most cases the minimum age limit for using social media is 13. Therefore none of the children attending St Winefride's should have a social media account. Although there are a number of sites aimed at children younger than 13, such as Club Penguin, Minecraft, Moshi Monsters, Roblox these generally require the parent/carer to input their email address to verify them. Below are the minimum age limits for applications that are currently popular, please bear in mind that new sites and games are appearing every day and this list cannot be deemed to be exhaustive in any way.

### Age 13:

Facebook

Google+

Instagram

Pinterest

Reddit

Snapchat

Tumblr

LinkedIn

### Age 16:

WhatsApp

### Age 17:

Vine

### Age 18:

Flickr

YouTube

*Both may be accessed  
at 13 with Parental  
Consent*

Please check the terms and conditions of use of any device or application that allows your child access to social media.

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## Review

The Governing Board reviews this policy every two years, or when new guidance is provided by the local authority. The governors may, however, review the policy earlier than this, if the government introduces new regulations, or if the governing body receives recommendations on how the policy might be improved

Date: 20<sup>th</sup> November 2017

Review Date: 20<sup>th</sup> November 2019

Signed:



Paul Underwood  
Headteacher



Tony Fernandes  
Chair of Governors