



IGNITE INNOVATE INSPIRE

Social Networking Policy

September 2024

This document sets out the policy of the Governing Body of Monkhouse Primary School on the use of computer based social networking communication and aims to set clear expectations of professional behaviour when engaging in such activities. This policy should be read in conjunction with the Online Safety policy, which outlines safeguarding provisions carried out by school during school hours.

Creating a safer online culture

At Monkhouse, we all rely on and benefit from the use of technology. As a school we aim to instil a safe online culture and realise how challenging it can be for home environments to ensure that their child remains safe online. We also appreciate that it is desirable to have particular measures in place to ensure that a child does not view inappropriate material from their mobile device or from a device at home. Where we hold a responsibility in educating children within Online Safety, at Monkhouse, we demonstrate our commitment to protecting our pupils online by working with National Online Safety, which we use to educate our children and also to provide resources for all parents and carers. These resources include explanation videos, monthly newsletters and weekly guides covering a huge range of topics: all of which can be viewed within your created space. As a school, we frequently encourage all parents and carers to sign up to this free to use resource through our school portal. In maintaining this safer culture and home relationship, we will often share particular information through the parental portal to keep parents and carers informed.

Introduction

- 101 Social networking and its development has become, in recent years, an increasingly important feature of modern communication between individuals, but also in terms of business and organisational communication. The expansion of such networks on the internet has transformed ways we interact and the school views this as a positive opportunity for closer communication with parents and other stakeholders within the community.

102 Though this technology brings with it new and exciting methods of communication, it also brings with it increasing risks relating to appropriate usage. It is therefore important that as a school we develop systems to safely embrace this technology when engaging with our stakeholders in the community, as part of an effective communication strategy. It is therefore important that we balance activities to take into account legal requirements, the reputation of the school and our partners and ensure that any activities are within agreed principles.

103 This policy has therefore been developed to accompany the school's Digital Learning and Online Safety Policy as agreed by the Governing Body. Though this latter strategy concentrates on the development of social media and networking within a Teaching & Learning related environment, this specific policy has been adopted to offer additional clarity in relation to personal usage, both inside and outside of school.

Defining social networking

201 For the purpose of this policy, social networking can be defined as:

“Web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system.”

202 This definition is commonly used to include websites which allow people to interact with each other in some way – by sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interests, examples evidence include:

- Facebook – a social networking service where users create personal profiles, add other users as friends and exchange messages.
- Twitter - a micro blogging service enabling its users to send and read publicly visible messages called tweets and subscribe to other users' tweets.
- Snapchat – an ‘in-the-moment’ way of sharing and communicating through photo and video messages/stories.
- TikTok – a platform for creating, sharing and discovering short music videos put together by users - think Karaoke for the digital age. The app is used by young people as an outlet to express themselves through singing, dancing, comedy, and lip-syncing and allows for direct messaging.

203 This list is not exhaustive and would include other web/app based services such as blogs, message boards, photo document and video sharing websites and microblogging services.

Aims & Objectives

301 The purpose of this policy is to ensure that personal usage of social networking sites promotes safer working practice and in doing so will minimise the risk of misplaced or malicious allegations made against workers within school. It will also act as a preventative measure in relation to workers misusing their position of trust and in doing so reduce the potential risk to the school (both legal and to its reputation) and to workers within school through a requirement that workers follow an agreed set of principles in their usage of social networking.

302 In addition it will ensure clarity between information issued on behalf of the school by a worker (covered by the school E-Strategy) and information released through general usage of social networking sites.

Scope

301 This document will be made available to all workers (as defined below) engaged in school who will then be expected to familiarise themselves with the principles covered within this policy. Where these principles are not adhered to then the school reserve the right to take appropriate action, in the following manner:

- Where they are an employee - reference may be made to the school disciplinary policy and procedure to determine appropriate action.
- Where they are an agency worker - reference may be made to the agency for their withdrawal and a request made for the agency to consider its own procedures relating to conduct.
- Where they are acting under a “contract for service” - reference may be made to the obligations within the relevant contract with the school.
- Where they are volunteering in school.
- Visitors **all** sign acceptable use policy.

302 This document does not replace or take priority over advice relating to other policies issued around safeguarding or IT security issues (email, ICT and data protection policies), but is intended to both supplement and complement any such documents.

303 This policy should also be read in conjunction with the schools digital strategy, together with the following school documentation:

- IT security and fair usage policy
- Equality policy
- Child protection policy
- Disciplinary policy and procedures
- Guidance on Cyberbullying
- Guidance for Safer Working Practice for Adults who Work with Children and Young People
- Guidance relating to the school e-strategy
- Staff Code of conduct

304 Whilst every attempt has been made to cover a wide range of situations, it is recognised that this policy cannot cover all eventualities. There may be times when professional judgements are made in situations not covered, or which directly contravene the standards outlined in this document. It is expected that in these circumstances workers in school will always advise the Headteacher of the justification for any such action already taken or proposed. Headteachers will in turn seek advice from the School Link HR Advisor where appropriate.

Principles

401 Though use of social networking sites not related to school based activities does not require approval, it is expected that workers covered by this policy will follow the following principles while engaged in such activities:

- Where it is intended to use social networking sites for an activity on behalf of school, you should ensure you have received approval from a member of the SLT prior to undertaking such activities.
- Communication between staff members and pupils / staff members and parents/carers by whatever method, should take place within clear and explicit professional boundaries as agreed by the school SLT (e.g. the school email system), conforming with the requirements of equalities legislation in such communications. Any digression from such boundaries should be reported to members of the senior leadership team.
- Personal use of the internet, including access to social networking sites, will be permitted on designated school based equipment (where available) either before or after work or during designated lunch periods. Non work related access during work time is not permitted unless prior approval has been granted by a member of the SLT. Usage should not involve any breach of copyright, or promote any financial, commercial, business, or political interests.
- All workers, particularly those new to the school setting, should review their social networking sites when they join the school to ensure that information available publicly about them is accurate and appropriate (e.g. photographs that may cause embarrassment to themselves and the school if they are published outside of the site).
- In line with personal social media accounts that staff may hold, it is strongly recommended that these profile settings are reviewed and are set to private/friends only. We recognise that this is best practice carried out by school staff already and state this is to protect yourselves against becoming discoverable from parents, children or other unwanted persons. This will also protect you from uploaded content that you may only intend on friends/family members seeing and having access to.
- Confidentiality needs to be considered at all times through ensuring workers do not release any confidential information about themselves, the school or its partners, pupils or other stakeholders within the community.

- Assigning a school pupil as a 'friend' on their social networking page is prohibited, and caution should be taken regarding becoming 'friends' with ex-students where siblings continue to attend the school. In addition, workers should never use, access, or become a "friend" of the social networking pages of pupils on the roll of the school.
- Should a pupil request a member of staff to be a 'friend' on a social media account, this request should be denied, the child blocked and the request should be reported to SLT and appropriate communications will be held with a parent or carer of the pupil.
- When using social media sites, when not in use for school business, you should refrain from using work based e-mail contact address (such as @monkhouseprimary.co.uk) or the school logo unless prior approval has been granted by the school SLT.
- While commenting within social networking sites, remarks must never be derogatory, offensive, reflect negatively on your professionalism, or have the potential to bring the school into disrepute.
- There will be occasions when there are social contacts between pupils and staff, where for example the parent and teacher are part of the same social circle. These contacts however, will be easily recognised and should be openly acknowledged with the Head Teacher where there may be implications for the adult and their position within the school setting.
- All workers have a responsibility to report any unsuitable material uncovered relating to workers activities within a social networking site to the Headteacher, who will determine the appropriate action inclusive of reporting to external agencies.
- When using school Social Media accounts, I will not make comments or posts that may bring the school, staff, pupils or wider members into disrepute. I will check approved lists to ensure children are authorised to be tweeted before tweeting names and pictures. I will take all reasonable steps to ensure our children are protected on twitter and posts are appropriate
- I will notify a member of SLT or ICT coordinator immediately of any issues with any of the school's social media accounts. This includes any suspicious activity or any posts, tags, photographs or tweets about our school, children or staff that may be inappropriate or harmful.

Guidance/protection for pupils on using social networking sites

- No pupil under the age of 13 should be accessing social networking sites.
- No pupil may access social networking sites during the school working day.
- The school's Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) outlines the rules for using IT for educational purposes and these rules apply to online learning using Google Classroom.
- All pupil mobile phones must be handed to a member of staff at the beginning of the school day. Failure to follow this guidance will result in a total ban for the student using a mobile phone.
- No pupil should attempt to join a staff member's areas on networking sites. If pupils attempt to do this, the member of staff is to inform the Headteacher. 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.
- Please report any improper contact or cyber bullying to your class teacher as soon as it happens.
- Any incidents of cyber bullying by pupils will be dealt with in the strongest possible terms.

Review of policy

501 Due to the ever changing nature of information and communication technologies the Governing Body of Monkhouse Primary School have agreed to review this policy annually and, if necessary, more frequently in response to any significant new developments.

Further Information

601 Information relating to a National Education Network e-safety audit tool for schools can be found at:

<http://www.northerngrid.org/index.php/esafety-and-security>

additional resources for students, teachers, governors and parents relating to social networking and use of the internet can be found at the national UK safer Internet Centre:

<http://www.saferinternet.org.uk/>

<http://nationalonlinesafety.com>