



Healthy Empowered Ambitious Respectful Together

*Our values are at the HEART of our school*

# Social Media Guidance

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| Policy Author:              | Alison Hall |
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## **Introduction**

Social media sites play an important role in the lives of many people, including children. We recognise that social networking can bring many benefits, but there are also potential risks. The aim of this document is to give clarity to the way in which social media sites are to be used by the Washingwell Primary School community: pupils, staff, parents, carers, governors and other volunteers. All members of the school community should bear in mind that information they share through social media, even if it is on private spaces, it is still subject to copyright, data protection and Freedom of Information legislation, the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006, and UK libel and defamation laws.

## **The use of social media sites by employees in a personal capacity**

Employees are asked to follow the guidance outlined in the school staff handbook and also in the Gateshead Council Staff Code of Conduct to protect both themselves and the school.

## **Comments posted by Parents/Guardians on social media sites**

Parents/Guardians will be made aware of their responsibilities regarding their use of social media via this guidance document (in particular when their child joins the school), the school website and school newsletters.

Parents/Guardians are asked:

- not to post images (photos or videos) of pupils other than their own children on any social media sites unless they have written permission of parents of other children pictured.
- to raise queries, concerns or complaints directly with the school rather than posting them on social media.
- not to post malicious or fictitious comments on social media sites about any member of the school community.

As parents of pupils at this school if you are thinking of sharing views on the school, its staff or its operational activities we expect you to make your comments in a respectful way. Please do not make personal, aggressive or hateful comments about staff or pupils and their parents. If your comments are found offensive by the reader, we will ask you to remove your comments. We want to avoid being in this situation as it stops you from sharing your views.

We would request that you set the tone for online conversations about the school, its employees and the pupils by being polite and the use of familiar language should not include swear words or abusive slang. Should you feel the need to criticise an individual at the school we would expect you to contact the person directly to meet and discuss the reason for criticism in the first instance in order to resolve any issues. Should you feel the need to take the matter further then you can arrange to speak to the head teacher or Chair of Governors or follow the school's complaints procedure.

However should you feel the need to express yourself on a social media site we ask that any criticism is made in as constructive a manner as possible as different things are acceptable to different people. If you think there's a possibility that someone may be offended by your comments, please re-write your comments in a more sensitive way.

If any comments are deemed to be defamatory i.e. which are untrue, inaccurate and may damage the reputation of the person, the individual may be advised to take legal proceedings against the author of those comments which may result not only in the comments being taken off the social media sites but also a financial cost to the author to reimburse the individual for any injury to feelings.

Any comments which include racist, sexist, homophobic remarks, harassment or intimidation and threats of violence will be reported to the police for their investigation. Authors of such comments may find that criminal proceedings are then commenced against them.

You are reminded that you are legally responsible for what you do or say online and what you say openly can be accessed around the world in minutes and can be republished elsewhere. You must be willing to take personal responsibility for anything that you say online.

A school should be a safe place where relationships between staff, parents and visitors demonstrates a mutual respect and recognition of shared responsibility for pupils' welfare and educational progress.

We want to work with our parents to ensure that the school is a safe place for all and if you do feel strongly enough about an incident at the school involving a member of staff then we encourage you to resolve it. But the best way to resolve issues is by meeting the individual member of staff at the school or the head teacher for an open and constructive discussion to ensure the best resolution for all concerned.

**Facebook is Washingwell Community Primary School's chosen social media platform and the information below ascertains their proper use by staff and children.**

The school:

- will only post images of children at the school whose parents have given written signed consent.
- will not enter into private discussions with others.
- will not allow other users to post on our newsfeed but relevant, appropriate comments will be accepted.
- will be used principally to be followed by parents and members of the local community in order to advertise the excellent work by staff, children, parents and governors. Similarly, it will also contain information detailing special events in school. The aim of this is to run alongside more traditional methods like sending home letters, and not to replace it. .
- will not actively seek to follow other users in order to protect itself from inappropriate content being distributed into its news feed but may tag other users. However, exceptions may be made where following an @ handle or page has obvious benefits to the school. Once again, these will be decided on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the Senior Leadership Team.

Washingwell Community Primary School sees itself more as a distributor of information to those who follow it and not as a receiver of information.

- welcomes any referencing, mentions, or interactions that post the school in a **positive light** only. Therefore, Washingwell Primary School deems any of the following as inappropriate:
  - Offensive language or remarks aimed at the school, its staff, parents, governors or others affiliated with the school;
  - Unsuitable images or content posted into its feed;
  - Unsuitable images or content finding its way from another's account into the schools newsfeed;
  - Images or text that infringe upon copyright;
  - Comments that aim to undermine the school, its staff, parents, governors or others affiliated with the school.
- Any inappropriate content will be deleted and its users will be removed, blocked, and, depending on the nature of the comment, reported to Twitter/Facebook. Furthermore, incidents of a more serious nature may be reported to the appropriate authority.