

Frogwell Primary School

Safe and Happy – Supportive – Respectful – Aspirational - Inclusive

Social Media

Date of Policy: Term 1- 2025

Review Date: Term 1- 2026

Governor Responsibility: Full Governing Body

Governor Lead: Nigel Linacre

Nominated Lead Member of Staff: Imogen Woods

Status & Review Cycle: Statutory Annual

Rationale

Social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn) is a broad term for any kind of online platform which enables people to directly interact with each other. However, some games, for example Minecraft, Roblox or World of Warcraft and video sharing platforms such as You Tube have social media elements to them.

Frogwell Primary School recognises the numerous benefits and opportunities which a social media presence offers. Staff, parents/carers and pupils/students are actively encouraged to find creative ways to use social media. However, there are some risks associated with social media use, especially around the issues of safeguarding, bullying and personal reputation. This policy aims to encourage the safe use of social media by the school, its staff, parents/carers and children.

Scope

This policy is subject to the school's codes of conduct and acceptable use agreements.

This policy:

- Applies to all staff and to all online communications which directly or indirectly, represent the school
- Applies to such online communications posted at any time and from anywhere
- Encourages the safe and responsible use of social media through training and education
- Defines the monitoring of public social media activity pertaining to the school

The school respects privacy and understands that staff and pupils/students may use social media forums in their private lives. However, personal communications likely to have a negative impact on professional standards and/or the school's reputation are within the scope of this policy.

Professional communications are those made through official channels, posted on a school account or using the school name. All professional communications are within the scope of this policy.

Personal communications are those made via a personal social media accounts. In all cases, where a personal account is used which associates itself with, or impacts on, the school, it must be made clear that the member of staff is not communicating on behalf of the school with an appropriate disclaimer. Such personal communications are within the scope of this policy.

Personal communications which do not refer to or impact upon the school are outside the scope of this policy.

Social media (including here all apps, sites and games that allow sharing and interaction between users) is a fact of modern life, and as a school, we accept that many parents, staff and pupils will use it. However, as stated in the school's Acceptable Use Policy Agreement, we expect everybody to behave in a positive manner, engaging respectfully with the school and each other on social media, in the same way as they would face to face. This positive behaviour can be summarised as not making any posts which are or could be construed as bullying, aggressive, rude, insulting, illegal or otherwise inappropriate, or which might bring the school or (particularly for staff) teaching profession into disrepute. This applies both to public pages and to private posts, e.g. parent chats, pages or groups.

If parents have a concern about the school, we would urge them to contact us directly and in private to resolve the matter. If an issue cannot be resolved in this way, the school complaints procedure, which can be found on our website at www.frogwell.co.uk, should be followed. Sharing complaints on social media is unlikely to help resolve the matter, but can cause upset to staff, pupils and parents, also undermining staff morale and the reputation of the school (which is important for the pupils we serve).

Many social media platforms have a minimum age of 13 (note that WhatsApp is 16+), but the school regularly deals with issues arising on social media with pupils under the age of 13. We ask parents to respect age ratings on social media platforms wherever possible and not encourage or condone underage use. It is worth noting that Online Harms regulation is likely to require more stringent age verification measures over the coming years.

The school has a role to play in discouraging underage use of social media applications, while at the same time needing to acknowledge reality in order to best help our pupils to avoid or cope with issues if they arise. Online safety lessons will look at social media and other online behaviour, how to be a good friend online and how to report bullying, misuse, intimidation or abuse. However, children will often learn most from the models of behaviour they see and experience, which will often be from adults.

Parents can best support this by talking to their children about the apps, sites and games they use (you don't need to know them – ask your child to explain it to you), with whom, for how long, and when (late at night / in bedrooms is not helpful for a good night's sleep and productive teaching and learning at school the next day). You may wish to use the Digital Family Agreement with example statements to help families agree on shared expectations around time spent on devices, and ground rules like no phones at the table or in the bedroom at night-time, and refer to the Top Tips for Parents poster along with tips around parental controls, settings, apps and games, and introduce the Children's Commission Digital 5 A Day – all available at <https://parentsafe.lgfl.net/>

Email is the official electronic communication channel between parents and the school. Google Classroom and Class Dojo should only be used for teaching and learning matters and not for things like absence reporting or arranging appointments with teachers.

Pupils are not allowed to be 'friends' with or make a friend request to any staff, governors, volunteers and contractors or otherwise communicate via social media. Staff, governors etc are, equally, prohibited from any such online relationships with pupils. Any attempt to do so may be a safeguarding concern or disciplinary matter and should be notified to the Headteacher.

Pupils are discouraged from 'following' staff, governor, volunteer or contractor public accounts (e.g. following a staff member with a public Instagram account). However, we accept that this can be hard to control (but this highlights the need for staff to remain professional in their private lives). In the reverse situation, however, staff must not follow such public student accounts. Staff are reminded that they are obliged not to bring the school or profession into disrepute and the easiest way to avoid this is to have the strictest privacy settings and avoid inappropriate sharing and oversharing online. They should never discuss the school or its stakeholders on social media and be careful that their personal opinions might not be attributed to the school, trust or local authority, bringing the school into disrepute.

The serious consequences of inappropriate behaviour on social media are underlined by the fact that during the last 5 years, there have been 263 Prohibition Orders issued by the Teacher Regulation Agency to teaching staff that involved misuse of social media/technology.

All members of the school community are reminded that particularly in the context of social media, it is important to comply with the school policy on Digital Images and Video (see Online Safety policy) and permission is sought before uploading photographs, videos or any other information about other people. The statements of the Acceptable Use Policy Agreement (AUPA) are also relevant to social media activity, as is the school's Data Protection Policy.

Extremism

The school has obligations relating to radicalisation and all forms of extremism under the Prevent Duty. Staff will not support or promote extremist organisations, messages or individuals, give them a voice or opportunity to visit the school, nor browse, download or send material that is considered offensive or of an extremist nature. We ask for parents' support in this also, especially relating to social media, where extremism and hate speech can be widespread on certain platforms.

Organisational control

Roles & Responsibilities

SLT

- Facilitating training and guidance on Social Media use.
- Developing and implementing the Social Media policy
- Taking a lead role in investigating any reported incidents.
- Making an initial assessment when an incident is reported and involving appropriate staff and external agencies as required.
- Receive completed applications for Social Media accounts
- Approve account creation

Administrator/Moderator

- Create the account following SLT approval
- Store account details, including passwords securely
- Be involved in monitoring and contributing to the account
- Control the process for managing an account after the lead staff member has left the organisation (closing or transferring)

Staff

- Staff may use social media to communicate with learners via a school online account such as Class Dojo or Google Classroom for teaching and learning purposes but must only do so within appropriate boundaries.
- Know the contents of and ensure that any use of social media is carried out in line with this and other relevant policies
- Attending appropriate training
- Regularly monitoring, updating and managing content he/she has posted via school accounts
- Adding an appropriate disclaimer to personal accounts when naming the school

Process for creating new accounts

The school community is encouraged to consider if a social media account will help them in their work, e.g. a school Twitter account, or a "Friends of the school" Facebook page. Anyone wishing to create such an account must present a business case to the Senior Leadership Team which covers the following points:

- The aim of the account
- The intended audience
- How the account will be promoted
- Who will run the account (at least two staff members should be named)
- Will the account be open or private/closed

Following consideration by the SLT an application will be approved or rejected. In all cases, the SLT must be satisfied that anyone running a social media account on behalf of the school has read and

understood this policy and received appropriate training. This also applies to anyone who is not directly employed by the school, including volunteers or parents.

Monitoring

School accounts must be monitored regularly and frequently (preferably 7 days a week, including during holidays). Any comments, queries or complaints made through those accounts must be responded to within 24 hours (or on the next working day if received at a weekend) even if the response is only to acknowledge receipt. Regular monitoring and intervention is essential in case a situation arises where bullying or any other inappropriate behaviour arises on a school social media account.

Behaviour

- The school requires that all users using social media adhere to the standard of behaviour as set out in this policy and other relevant policies.
- Digital communications by staff must be professional and respectful at all times and in accordance with this policy. Staff will not use social media to infringe on the rights and privacy of others or make ill-considered comments or judgments about staff. School social media accounts must not be used for personal gain. Staff must ensure that confidentiality is maintained on social media even after they leave the employment of the school.
- Users must declare who they are in social media posts or accounts. Anonymous posts are discouraged in relation to school activity.
- If a journalist makes contact about posts made using social media staff must follow the school media policy before responding.
- Unacceptable conduct, (e.g. defamatory, discriminatory, offensive, harassing content or a breach of data protection, confidentiality, copyright) will be considered extremely seriously by the school and will be reported as soon as possible to a relevant senior member of staff, and escalated where appropriate.
- The use of social media by staff while at work may be monitored, in line with school policies. The school permits reasonable and appropriate access to private social media sites. However, where excessive use is suspected, and considered to be interfering with relevant duties, disciplinary action may be taken
- The school will take appropriate action in the event of breaches of the social media policy. Where conduct is found to be unacceptable, the school will deal with the matter internally. Where conduct is considered illegal, the school will report the matter to the police and other relevant external agencies, and may take action according to the disciplinary policy.

Legal considerations

- Users of social media should consider the copyright of the content they are sharing and, where necessary, should seek permission from the copyright holder before sharing.
- Users must ensure that their use of social media does not infringe upon relevant data protection laws, or breach confidentiality.

Handling abuse

- When acting on behalf of the school, handle offensive comments swiftly and with sensitivity.
- If a conversation turns and becomes offensive or unacceptable, school users should block, report or delete other users or their comments/posts and should inform the audience exactly why the action was taken
- If you feel that you or someone else is subject to abuse by colleagues through use of a social networking site, then this action must be reported using the agreed school protocols.

- Further to this, where an incident relates to an inappropriate, upsetting, violent or abusive social media post by a member of the school community, Frogwell Primary School will request that the post be deleted and will expect this to be actioned promptly.
- Where an offending post has been made by a third party, the school may report it to the platform where it is hosted, and may contact the Professionals' Online Safety Helpline, POSH (run by the UK Safer Internet Centre) for support or help to accelerate this process. The police or other authorities may be involved where a post is potentially illegal or dangerous.

Tone

The tone of content published on social media should be appropriate to the audience, whilst retaining appropriate levels of professional standards. Key words to consider when composing messages are:

- Engaging
- Conversational
- Informative
- Friendly (on certain platforms, e.g. Facebook)

Use of images

School use of images can be assumed to be acceptable, providing the following guidelines are strictly adhered to.

- Permission to use any photos or video recordings should be sought in line with the school's digital and video images policy. If anyone, for any reason, asks not to be filmed or photographed then their wishes should be respected.
- Under no circumstances should staff share or upload student/pupil pictures online other than via school owned social media accounts
- Staff should exercise their professional judgement about whether an image is appropriate to share on school social media accounts. Students/pupils should be appropriately dressed, not be subject to ridicule and must not be on any school list of children whose images must not be published.
- If a member of staff inadvertently takes a compromising picture which could be misconstrued or misused, they must delete it immediately.

Personal use

Staff

- Personal communications are those made via a personal social media accounts. In all cases, where a personal account is used which associates itself with the school or impacts on the school, it must be made clear that the member of staff is not communicating on behalf of the school with an appropriate disclaimer. Such personal communications are within the scope of this policy.
- Personal communications which do not refer to or impact upon the school are outside the scope of this policy.
- Where excessive personal use of social media in school is suspected, and considered to be interfering with relevant duties, disciplinary action may be taken
- The school permits reasonable and appropriate access to private social media sites.

Pupil/Students

- Staff are not permitted to follow or engage with current or prior pupils/students of the school on any personal social media network account.
- The school education programme should enable the pupils/students to be safe and responsible users of social media.

- Pupils/students are encouraged to comment or post appropriately about the school. Any offensive or inappropriate comments will be resolved by the use of the school's behaviour policy

Parents/Carers

- If parents/carers have access to a school learning platform where posting or commenting is enabled, parents/carers will be informed about acceptable use.
- The school has an active parent/carer education programme which supports the safe and positive use of social media. This includes information on the website.
- Parents/Carers are encouraged to comment or post appropriately about the school. In the event of any offensive or inappropriate comments being made, the school will ask the parent/carer to remove the post and invite them to discuss the issues in person. If necessary, refer parents to the school's complaints procedures.

Monitoring the school's online presence

- As part of active social media engagement, it is considered good practice to pro-actively monitor the Internet for public postings about the school.
- Frogwell Primary School works on the principle that if we don't manage our social media reputation, someone else will. Online Reputation Management (ORM) is about understanding and managing our digital footprint (everything that can be seen or read about the school online). Few parents will apply for a school place without first 'googling' the school, and the Ofsted preinspection check includes monitoring what is being said online.
- Negative coverage almost always causes some level of disruption. Up to half of all cases dealt with by the Professionals Online Safety Helpline (POSH: helpline@saferinternet.org.uk) involve schools' (and staff members') online reputation.
- Even though there are no official/active school social media accounts at this time, we aim to manage and monitor our social media footprint carefully to know what is being said about the school and to respond to criticism and praise in a fair, responsible manner.