

BUSHBURY HILL PRIMARY SCHOOL



Social Networking and Mobile Phone Policy

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Date Approved By Governors	July 2024
Review Date	July 2026

Bushbury Hill Primary School – Social Networking and Mobile Phone Policy

Introduction.

This document sets out the school's policy on social media and networking and use of mobile phones. New technologies are an integral part of our lives and are widespread powerful tools which bring new communication opportunities in teaching and learning for school staff in many ways. It is important that we are able to use these technologies and services effectively but that this should be balanced with protecting our reputation and integrity. With this in mind, all staff working with pupils have a responsibility to maintain public confidence in their ability to safeguard pupils' welfare, and to behave in the best interests of the pupils and the school they work for. This procedure is also designed to protect staff from possible harassment by a colleague via a social networking site.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the school's Safeguarding, E-safety, ICT and any other related policies and should be read in conjunction with the school's Disciplinary Procedure. If staff fail to adhere to the guidelines set out in this policy, their conduct could be called into question and may result in disciplinary action being taken against them which could ultimately lead to their dismissal.

Whilst this policy has attempted to cover a wide range of situations, it cannot cover all eventualities. Staff using social media and networking sites should avoid any conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question their motives and intentions.

The school understands that employees have the right to a private life and would respect this so long as employees follow the guidelines set out in this policy and other documents it refers to. The school expects employees to maintain reasonable standards in their behaviour such that enable them to maintain an effective learning environment and also to uphold public trust and confidence in them and their profession. Employees should avoid any conduct which is likely to bring the school into disrepute.

For the purpose of the policy, social media and social networking sites are websites by which personal information or opinions can be presented for public consumption and websites which allow people to interact with each other. Examples of social media and social networking sites could be all internet presence including blogs, Facebook, X, Instagram, Bebo, Youtube and Snapchat. This list is not exhaustive as new technology is emerging on a daily basis but it seeks to provide examples to staff. The definition of social networking and media may be widened as new technologies emerge.

Mobile phones, alongside other forms of technology have changed the way and the speed in which we communicate. They provide security and reassurance; however there are also associated risks. The aim of this policy is to promote safe and appropriate practice through establishing clear and robust acceptable guidelines. This can be achieved through balancing protection against potential misuse with recognition that mobile phones are effective communication tools- which in turn can contribute to safeguarding practice and protection.

This policy applies to all individuals who have access to mobile phones on site. This includes staff, volunteers, pupils, parents, carers, visitors. This list is not exhaustive.

Staff guidelines in relation to social networking and media activity.

- a. Staff wishing to have a social media presence should make sure that their school name / Wolverhampton Council is not identified on this presence unless there is, on an objective assessment, a legitimate reason for doing so and should ensure that comments made are from their own behalf, for example by writing in the first person and using a personal e-mail address as opposed to their employer's e-mail address.
- b. Staff are personally responsible for their communication in social media. This includes any media attachments like photographs or videos. What staff publish on a social media site may be available for any member of the public to read (including parents, members of the Governing Body, colleagues, members of the Local Authority and prospective employers) for a long time. Staff should always think carefully about this when posting personal content as unprofessional images or comments which are posted on public profiles could lead to disciplinary proceedings.
- c. Staff should not post any media attachments, such as photographs or videos, which have subjects (pupils/colleagues etc) of the school in them. Anyone wishing to post such items should always speak to the Headteacher in the first instance.

- d. Staff should not place any information regarding their employer, their colleagues, pupils or people they have come into contact with as part of their employment on social networking or media sites.
- e. Staff are advised for their own protection not to put personal information such as home addresses or personal telephone numbers on a social networking or media site.
- f. Staff should ensure their account is set to private using settings and regular check that this is still the case following system updates.

Staff guidelines in relation to pupil/parent contact.

- a. Staff should not interact with any pupil or parent (or past pupil under the age of 18) of the school on a social media or networking site. For example, the school would not think it appropriate for staff to 'friend' a pupil or request that a pupil 'friend' them. If a member of staff receives a request to interact with a pupil or past pupil under the age of 18, they should inform the Headteacher.
- b. Any electronic communication regarding the school or the work staff are carrying out in the school (including telephone and text messaging contact) with pupils or parents/carers should only take place using the school's formal communication systems. Staff should use only the school's website, the school's e-mail address or school's telephone number when communicating with pupils and parents/carers.
- c. Staff should not post remarks or comments on-line or engage in online activities which may bring the school into disrepute.
- d. If a pupil or parent tries to make contact then the Headteacher should be informed and the request ignored.

Social media and networking sites and cyberbullying.

- a. Staff should never use the social media to abuse or bully or otherwise comment about colleagues, pupils, carers of pupils or anyone associated with the wider context of the school (e.g. member of the Governing Body, Local Authority, sponsor etc). Staff are expected to act respectfully when using social media and to avoid language which may be deemed as offensive to other people. For example, the school would not expect any member of staff to post anything which:
 - Could be construed as discriminatory
 - Could be construed as racist
 - E-mails untrue or misleading information
 - Engages in criminal activity
 - Is defamatory about people or organisations
- b. Staff who feel that they are subject to social media bullying by another member of staff, pupil or a parent should where possible save evidence (e.g. e-mails, screen prints, text messages) and immediately report this to the Headteacher for further investigation. When the complaint is against the Headteacher, the concern should be raised with the Chair of the Governing Body for further investigation.
- c. Staff who feel that a colleague is not adhering to this policy should report their concerns to the Headteacher for further investigation. Where a complaint is against the Headteacher, the concern should be raised with the Chair of the Governing Body for further investigation.

Mobile phones

It is recognised that it is the enhanced functions of many mobile phones that cause the most concern, and which are most susceptible to misuse. Misuse includes the taking and distribution of indecent images, exploitation and bullying.

- a) It is appreciated that it can be very difficult to detect when such devices are present or being used, particularly in relation to enhanced functions, such as cameras. The use of all mobile phones is therefore limited, regardless of their capabilities. The aim is to avoid distraction of the working day, and to minimise the opportunities for any individual to make covert images or misuse functions in any other way.

Code of Conduct

A code of conduct is promoted with the aim of creating a cooperative workforce, where staff work as a team, have high values and respect each other; thus creating a strong morale and a sense of commitment leading to increased productivity.

It is therefore ensured that all practitioners:

- Have a clear understanding of what constitutes misuse
- Know how to minimise risk
- Avoid putting themselves into compromising situations which could be misinterpreted and lead to possible allegations.
- Understand the need for professional boundaries and clear guidance regarding acceptable use
- Are responsible for self-moderation of their own behaviours
- Are aware of reporting the importance of reporting concerns promptly.

Staff mobiles and smart watches

All staff should consistently enforce the school's policy on the use of mobile phones. Staff should not use their own mobile phone for personal reasons in front of pupils throughout the school day. This will empower staff to better challenge pupils to meet the school expectations and effectively enforce the prohibition of mobile phones throughout the school day.

- Employees are not permitted to make/receive calls/texts during work time (excluding break times) unless they have sought permission from the HT or DHT prior to receiving the call.
- Staff should ensure that mobile phones are turned off or on silent at all times while on school premises. They should not be left on display and should be kept in a safe place.
- Staff are not at any time permitted to use recording equipment on their mobile phones, for example to take recordings of children, or sharing images.
- Smart watches are not to be used to receive or send messages during work time.
- School ipads are allocated to be used by the teachers in that class for this purpose. Class Dojo, CloudW outlook and Teams have been downloaded so that recording, uploading of photos and communication between parents during the school day can be carried out safely on this device. This device can be taken home and used by teachers. Teachers can use their mobile phones at home to access these apps too if they choose.
- Mobile phones are not to be used in a space where pupils are present in line with the February 2024 DfE guidance https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65cf5f2a4239310011b7b916/Mobile_phones_in_schools_guidance.pdf e.g. classroom, playground however, if staff are taking children up to the field or are out on a school trip, phones should be taken to call the school office in the event of a safeguarding issue or accident so that help/assistance may be called for. When away from the school building e.g. on the school field or on a school trip, phones should be stored securely away from children and only used if needed in the event of an emergency, accident or safeguarding issue. The school should also be able to contact staff when taking children on school trips.
- Caretakers, need to have access to their phones for the school to contact them for daily duties. Caretakers should not use their phones for personal use when at work unless permission has been sought from the HT/DHT.
- There may be exceptional circumstances when a personal mobile phone may be used but permission from the Headteacher should be sought first.

Pupils

All pupils should be clear on the school's policy on prohibiting the use of mobile phones and should be reminded of the policy, and the consequences and sanctions for not following it, at the start of each school year and again, where appropriate, at regular intervals. Pupils should be taught the risks that are associated with the use of mobile phones, both in school and more broadly, to ensure they understand the decision being taken by their school to prohibit the use of mobile phones throughout the school day. These risks can include a loss of focus in lessons, classroom disruption and an increase in bullying. Pupils should also be taught the benefits of having a mobile phone-free environment and be encouraged to see such an environment as desirable and valuable. This will help to create intrinsic motivation to support the school culture.

- Mobile phones are not allowed in school. If a mobile phone is brought into school, they must be handed into the school office and locked away during the school day and collected at the end of the day.
- Pupils are not allowed to use their mobile phones on site. Phones are only to be switched back on once they have left the school property unless given permission by HT or DHT.
- Smart watches are not to be worn if they are able to send or receive messages and also if it has a camera.

Parents

Parents have an important role in supporting the school's policy on prohibiting the use of mobile phones and should be encouraged to reinforce and discuss the policy at home as appropriate, including the risks associated with mobile phone use and the benefits of a mobile phone-free environment. Where parents need to contact their child during the school day, they should be directed to the school office, where staff should be aware of the school's policy on relaying messages and facilitating contact. Where parents have questions or concerns, staff should address these in a timely manner and clearly communicate the reasons for prohibiting the use of mobile phones.

Parents are not allowed to use mobile phones when on the school premises, including in the reception foyer and at the school drop off and collection points. However, we do allow parents to use phones to photograph their own child during school events (if permission has been given by the HT) but they are reminded that they have signed to say they will not publish photographs of other people's children on the internet/social media, if other children have inadvertently been captured on camera when taking pictures of their own child.

Volunteers, Visitors, Governors and Contractors.

All volunteers, visitors Governors and contractors are expected to follow our mobile phone policy whilst on the school premises and ensure that their phones are switched off or on silent. If they do need to be used (with permission from the HT) then they are only used out of sight of the pupils.

This policy will be shared with staff and volunteers as part of their Safeguarding induction. This policy will be reviewed every 2 years.