



Lough View Integrated Primary School

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Rationale

Social media sites play an important role in the lives of many people. We recognise that while social networking can bring many benefits it can be fraught with risk. The aim of this document is to provide guidance on the way in which social media sites should be used by the Lough View school community and to promote their safe use by pupils, staff, parents, carers, governors and other volunteers.

Accordingly the purpose of the policy is to:

- safeguard our pupils;
- protect the school from legal risks;
- ensure that the reputation of the school, staff and governors is protected; and
- ensure that any users are able clearly to distinguish where information provided via social media is legitimately representative of the school.

Social Media and Safeguarding the Rights of the Child

"Children have the right to be protected from all forms of violence, they must be kept safe from harm, and they must be given proper care by those looking after them". (U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child. Article 19.)

"When adults or organisations make decisions which affect children, they must always think first about what would be best for the child". (U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child. Article 3.)

The health, safety and wellbeing of the children within Lough View is of paramount concern. This policy outlines how we discharge our responsibilities in safeguarding our children within the context of using social media.

Definitions and Scope

Social networking applications include, but are not limited to: Blogs, online discussion forums, collaborative spaces, media sharing services, 'Microblogging' applications, and online gaming environments. Examples include Twitter, Facebook, Windows Live Messenger, YouTube, Flickr, Xbox Live, Blogger, Tumblr, Last.fm, Snapchat, WhatsApp and Instagram.

Many of the principles of this policy also apply to other types of online presence such as virtual worlds.

All members of the school community should bear in mind that information they share through social media and networks, even if it is on private spaces, is still subject to copyright, data protection and Freedom of Information legislation, the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006, and UK libel and defamation laws. They must also operate in line with the school's Equality, Child Protection and Acceptable Use of ICT policies.

Within this policy there is a distinction between the use of school-sanctioned social media sites for professional educational purposes, and personal use of social media.

In the event of a serious breach of these guidelines the school reserves the right to seek legal advice and/or redress.

Guidelines for the safe use of Social Media

We expect that all members of the Lough View school community adhere to the following guidelines.

- **The use of social media sites by pupils whilst at school**

In general our pupils will not be able to access or use social media sites within school. Any use of suitable social media sites for educational purposes must be approved and supervised by a teacher.

Pupils and parents are reminded that the use of some social media sites such as Facebook and Snapchat are inappropriate for primary aged pupils.

- **Use of social media sites by employees in a personal capacity**

It is possible that a high proportion of staff will have their own social networking accounts. It is important that they protect their professional reputation, and that of the school, by ensuring that they use their personal sites in an appropriate manner.

Staff members should:

- familiarise themselves with social network sites' privacy settings in order to ensure that information is not automatically shared with a wider audience than intended;
- as a minimum requirement, ensure that all privacy settings are set to 'friends only', irrespective of use/purpose;

- ensure that they do not conduct or portray themselves, or allow friends to portray them, in a manner which may bring the school into disrepute, lead to valid parental complaints, be deemed as derogatory towards the school and/or its employees, be deemed as derogatory towards pupils, parents/carers or governors, bring into question their appropriateness to work with children or contravene current National Teacher Standards;
- ensure that they do not form online friendships or enter into communication outside of school with parents/carers as this could lead to professional relationships being compromised;
- ensure that they do not form online friendships or enter into online communication with pupils as this could lead to professional relationships being compromised, and/or safeguarding allegations being raised; and
- ensure that they should not post pictures related to school (without the Principal's consent) or post negative comments about school events.

All staff members should be aware that if their use of social media/networking sites contravenes this policy, they may be subject to disciplinary action.

Any inappropriate use by members of staff should be referred to the Principal in the first instance.

- **Creation of social media accounts by school staff for use in education**

There are many legitimate uses of social media within the curriculum and to support student learning. For example, the school has an official Twitter account (@loughviewips), There are also many possibilities for using social media to enhance and develop students' learning. However, when using social media for educational purposes, the following practices must be observed:

- Staff should set up a distinct and dedicated social media site or account for educational purposes. This should be entirely separate from any personal social media accounts held by that member of staff, and ideally should be linked to an official school email account.
- The URL and identity of the site should be notified to the appropriate Head of Faculty or member of the Senior Management Team (SMT) before access is permitted for students.
- The content of any school-sanctioned social media site should be solely professional and should reflect well on the school.
- Staff must not publish photographs of children without the written consent of parents /carers, identify by name any children featured in photographs, or allow personally identifying information to be published on school social media accounts.
- Care must be taken that any links to external sites from the account are appropriate and safe.
- Any inappropriate comments on or abuse of school-sanctioned social media should be removed and reported to a member of SMT.
- Staff should not engage with any direct messaging of students through social media where the message is not public.

- All social media accounts created for educational purposes should include a link in the about or Info page to the ICT Acceptable Use Policy on the school website. This will indicate that the account is officially sanctioned by Lough View IPS. All social media services must be approved by the Principal in advance of any educational work being undertaken.
- **Guidance for parents/carers on social media sites**

Parents/carers will be made aware of their responsibilities regarding their use of social media via this policy (in particular when their child joins the school), the school website and school newsletters. Specifically we would request that parents:

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

Dealing with incidents of online (cyber) bullying and/or libellous comments

There are four UK statutes that cover the use of Internet technology in relation to bullying. All cases of online bullying will be dealt with in accordance with the school's Anti-Bullying policy.

The school can take action with reference to any incident that takes place outside school hours if it:

- could have repercussions for the orderly running of the school;
- poses a threat to a member of the school community; and
- could adversely affect the reputation of the school, or its employees or governors.

Actions in response to a serious breach of our social media policy

In the event of a serious breach of this policy the school may take the following actions:

- Notification of social services and or PSNI – for any matters relating to Child Safeguarding.
- Legal action – for any matters which may be considered defamatory towards the school, its governors or employees.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually. It will be made available to all parents and to employees. This document and its associated policies are available on the school website.