



Purpose of the policy

This policy complements our joint schools' Parent and Visitor Respect Policy and links with the schools' E Safety & Acceptable Use Policies. With cyber safety and online bullying becoming increasingly problematic, this policy lays out the expectations we have of how social media is used regarding matters concerning our schools. The overriding function of this policy is to protect staff, students and parents from the many issues that can arise as a result of posting on social networking sites.

We appreciate that many of the proudest parenting moments take place within the school walls, and it's natural that parents and visitors want to share photos and videos on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. It's also sometimes tempting to use social media to vent frustrations with what may be happening in school but it's not easy to entirely control who gets to see what online and 'oversharing' could potentially put your child and others at risk. This policy aims to control these risks.

Who is protected by this policy?

Staff may be vulnerable to malicious and defamatory comments (and potentially even threats and abuse) from parents or pupils, and to allegations of grooming and other forms of online abuse. Nationally, 21% of teachers say they've had derogatory remarks made about them online.

Our expectations of staff are:

- Not accepting friend requests from current pupils, or ex-pupils under the age of 18
- Notifying the parents if a child sends a friend request
- They will not correspond with parents via social media, and they will use a school email address/Class Dojo instead *
- Not discussing anything to do with school, pupils or other staff members, or posting photos of school events online
- Only posting things that they would be happy to be attributed to them as a professional in education
- Not identifying themselves as being associated with the school
- Using the tightest privacy settings possible
- Not using social media on school devices, or on personal devices while on the school premises

*We acknowledge that staff members who are also parents may wish to use social media to communicate with other parents (e.g. arranging play dates between children). However, any communication must be done in line with school policy adhering to the expectations of staff and parents laid out in this policy and in the School Code of Conduct.

Parents may become involved in online disputes with other parents through social media. They may also potentially put their child and others within the school at risk by sharing photos, videos or other information that could make the children identifiable to others.

Our expectations of parents are:

- Not posting photos, videos or comments that include other children at the school
- Not using social media on their own devices while on school premises
- Not accessing social media while helping at school or on school visits
- Raising queries, concerns and complaints directly with the school rather than posting them on social media – whether on their own pages, in closed groups (e.g. groups set up for school parents to communicate with each other) or on the school's pages
- Not posting anything malicious about the school or any member of the school community

Pupils are at risk of cyber bullying, and may also become involved in cyber bullying themselves. They are also vulnerable to other serious crimes such as grooming and abduction if they share too much personal information on social media. Parents should supervise and help children manage their online use. The school's ICT Code of Conduct for children is a useful guide to encourage children to behave responsibly online and report anything of concern.

How is the social media policy enforced?

Social media policies aren't legally enforceable, but the schools will take their own action if a member of staff or parent breaches the policy.

The schools will also take social media infringements by teachers seriously. If, for example, a teacher is found to have been making inappropriate contact with a pupil on social media, they're likely to face internal disciplinary action, and in extreme cases – such as if a teacher is suspected of making sexual advances to a minor via social media – the police will become involved.

As far as parents are concerned, infringing a rule such as posting photos including other pupils is likely to mean that you're contacted by the school and asked to remove the content. If parents continue to break the rules, schools may ultimately ban cameras, phones and videos from school events. This may seem an extreme move but in some cases, identifying a child who is the subject of safeguarding (e.g. a child who has been adopted or fostered, or who has an injunction against a family member) could put them at risk. This means it's essential that schools uphold their policies through whatever means possible.

If a parent is accused of making malicious comments about the school or a teacher on social media, the school will follow the government advice that the parent should be invited to a meeting with the school. If the parent has a reasonable complaint, this should be addressed through the usual complaints procedure – but the school can request that the offensive comments are removed or block the parent from the site. If the parent refuses, the school will escalate the matter by reporting it to the social networking site or the local authority, or can seek legal advice. Comments that are threatening, abusive, racist, sexist or that could be seen as a hate crime will always be reported to the police as online harassment.

For more advice on helping your child stay safe online, visit the school's websites.

www.avenuejuniorschool.org

www.recreationroad.com