



POLICY ON PARENTAL USE OF SOCIAL NETWORKING AND INTERNET SITES

June 2023

1. Overview

Social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp are now widely used and these types of media allow people to communicate in ways that were not previously possible. Unfortunately such sites can be used inappropriately by some as a means of expressing negative or offensive views about schools and their staff. This document sets out our school's approach to parental and pupil use of such sites and sets out the procedures that will be followed and action that may be taken when it is considered that parents have used such facilities inappropriately. Where there is reference to "parent" in this document this also include carers, relatives or anyone associated with the school.

2. Objectives

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Encourage social networking sites to be used in a beneficial and positive way by parents
- Safeguard pupils, staff and anyone associated with the school from the negative effects of social networking site
- Safeguard the reputation of the school from unwarranted abuse on social networking sites
- Clarify what the school considers to be appropriate and inappropriate use of social networking sites by parents
- Set out the procedures the school will follow where it is considered that parents or pupils have inappropriately or unlawfully used social networking sites to the detriment of the school, staff, pupils or anyone else associated with the school
- Set out the action the school will consider taking if parents make inappropriate use of social networking sites

3. Appropriate use of social networking sites by parents

Social networking sites have potential to enhance the learning and achievement of pupils and enable parents to access information about the school and provide feedback efficiently and easily. In addition, the school recognises that many parents and other family members will have personal social networking accounts which they might use to discuss/share views about school issues with friends and acquaintances. As a guide, individuals should consider the following prior to posting any information on social networking sites about the school, staff, pupils or anyone else associated with the school:

- Is the social networking site the appropriate channel to raise concerns, give this feedback or express these views?
- Would a private and confidential discussion with someone in the school be more appropriate? If there are serious allegations being made/concerns being raised, social media or internet sites should not be used to name individuals and make abusive comments. Please contact the school to discuss any concerns you may have
- Are such comments likely to cause emotional or reputational harm which would not be justified, particularly if the school has not yet had a chance to investigate a complaint?
- The reputational impact that the posting of such material may have to the school, any detrimental harm that the school may suffer as a result of the posting and the impact that such a posting may have on pupils' learning

4. Inappropriate use of social networking sites by parents

Although social networking sites may appear to be the quickest and easiest way to express frustrations or concerns about the school and those associated with it, it is rarely appropriate to do so. Other channels such as through our schools Communication Policy, a discussion with the teacher or the Headteacher, or using the school's formal complaints process are much better suited to this. The School considers the following examples to be inappropriate uses of social networking sites.

- Naming children or posting any comments about children who attend Trefonen School
- Making allegations about staff or anyone else connected with the school
- Making any posts that could be deemed to be cyber-bullying
- Making complaints about the school or staff at the school
- Making defamatory statements about the school or staff at the school
- Posting negative or offensive comments about staff or any other individual connected to the school
- Posting racist or hate comments against individuals or groups
- Posting comments which threaten violence

5. Procedure the school will follow if inappropriate use continues

The School will always try to deal with concerns raised by parents in a professional and appropriate manner and understands that parents may not always realise when they have used social networking sites inappropriately. Therefore, as a first step the school will usually discuss the matter with the parent to try and resolve it and to ask that the relevant information be removed from the social networking site in question. If the parent refuses to do this and continues to use social networking sites in a manner the school considers inappropriate, the school will consider taking the following action:

- Take legal advice and/or legal action where the information posted is defamatory in any way or if the circumstances warrant this
- Set out the school's concerns to you in writing, giving you a warning and requesting that the material in question is removed
- Contact the police where the school feels it appropriate — for example, if it considers a crime (such as harassment) has been committed or in cases where the posting has a racial

or 'hate crime' element, is considered to be grossly obscene, grossly offensive or is threatening violence

- If the inappropriate comments have been made on our school website or forum our school may take action to block or restrict that individual's access to that website or forum
- Contact the host/provider of the social networking site to complain about the content of the site and ask for removal of the information
- Take other legal action against the individual.

6. Other relevant policies:

- Acceptable use of the Internet Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Communication Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Equality Policy
- Parent Code of Conduct
- Positive Behaviour Policy

School Policies are available on our school website: <https://www.trefonenschool.co.uk/policies/>

Agreed by the governing body of Trefonen Primary School

Date:

APPENDICES:

Letter 1: Parents' misuse of social media

Dear [name],

It has recently come to our attention that you've used [social media and/or private Facebook or chat groups] to:

Amend this list as appropriate, or describe the incident in question:

- Complain about individual members of staff
- Complain about the school
- Make inappropriate comments about members of staff, or other parents or pupils
- Draw attention to behaviour incidents
- Post pictures of children that aren't your own

Include a link to the social media post if possible.

Depending on the nature of the incident, adapt one of the sections below.

If the incident relates to complaints about individual members of staff:

Our staff are committed, dedicated professionals who deserve to be treated with respect.

If you have a concern or complaint about a member of staff, you should raise it directly with the school, in line with our complaints procedure.

Comments, concerns or complaints posted on social media can't be addressed by the school in a constructive manner.

A copy of our complaints procedure is available on our website, or you can request one from the school office.

If the incident relates to complaints about the school:

We take complaints and concerns from parents seriously, and will try to resolve them as best we can.

In order to do this, parents need to follow our complaints procedure, and raise any concerns by contacting the school directly.

Complaints raised on social media can't be addressed constructively.

A copy of our complaints procedure is available on our website, or you can request one from the school office.

If the incident relates to inappropriate comments about members of staff, or other parents or pupils:

At Trefonen Primary School, we believe it's important for our pupils to learn how to treat others with respect, including when they're online.

Parents have an important role to play in modelling this for their children.

We ask parents to kindly refrain from using inappropriate language, or from speaking about staff, parents and pupils in a way that is rude, intimidating or threatening.

We expect all members of our community to treat each other with respect.

If the incident relates to a behaviour incident:

The school has a robust behaviour policy, and our staff work hard to ensure it's applied consistently while pupils are in school.

Our policy also sets out when we will intervene in behaviour incidents that occur outside of school.

If you're aware of a behaviour incident, please make an appointment to speak to the appropriate member of staff directly.

Discussing behaviour incidents online doesn't help the school address the issue. It may also prevent the school from conducting a full and fair investigation, or present a safeguarding concern for any parents or pupils named in the incident.

A copy of our behaviour policy is available on our website, or you can request one from the school office.

If you'd like to make an appointment to speak to the headteacher or another member of staff, please contact the school office on 01691 652960.

If the incident relates to posts including pictures of other children:

Our school has a responsibility to keep pupils safe online and offline.

You must not take or share photos or videos on social media of children who aren't your own, unless you have the express consent of the other child's parents.

Children, and parents, must be allowed to control what information about them, if any, is shared online.

In some cases, posting photos of a child online can present a safeguarding concern.

Please delete or remove any photos of other children you have taken or shared without their parents' consent.

If appropriate, add this at the end of any of the sections above:

If you continue to [make inappropriate comments, complain about staff/the school, draw attention to behaviour incidents, etc.] in this way, the school may take further action.

We will seek legal advice if we believe any comments about the school, or individual members of staff, to be defamatory, indecent or threatening.

We will involve the police if we believe comments or behaviour are threatening or discriminatory.

I may also consult with the governing board about banning you from the school site.

If you would like to discuss the [incident(s)] further, please call the school office and make an appointment.

Sincerely,

Cathy Dunleavy
Headteacher

Letter 2: Social media: letter to parents

Dear parents/carers,

Safe and responsible social media use

We have noted in recent [weeks/months], an increased number of incidents where parents/carers have used social media or private Facebook or chat groups to:

Amend this list as appropriate:

- Complain about individual members of staff
- Complain about the school
- Make inappropriate comments about members of staff, other parents or pupils
- Draw attention to behaviour incidents
- Post pictures of children that aren't their own

At Trefonen Primary School, we want our pupils to grow into respectful young people, who understand how to settle differences in a respectful and constructive manner, both online and offline.

Our ICT and internet acceptable use agreements set clear expectations for pupils and parents about online conduct.

We expect parents to abide by these guidelines so that you can help us model safe, responsible and appropriate social media use for our pupils.

This includes voicing opinions about the school in a way that respects the hard work, dedication and professionalism of our staff, and speaking to or about other parents and children in a way that is respectful and appropriate.

Complaints and concerns

There may be times where, as a parent, you don't agree with something the school is doing, or where you may have specific concerns. We welcome your feedback, and the opportunity to address any concerns you may have.

The most appropriate way to raise concerns is directly with the school, in line with our Communication Policy and complaints procedure. Airing complaints or negative opinions on social media does not help the school to address the issue in the most constructive way.

You can call the school and speak to a member of staff, or book an appointment to speak with the headteacher or another member of staff face-to-face.

Posting about other parents and pupils

We know that social media is an important way for many in our community to share their day-to-day lives and special events with others. However, we ask that parents think carefully before posting things on social media that contain the names or images of other parents and children.

The school has a responsibility to keep pupils safe online, and posting information about children other than your own (including pictures or videos), without the consent of their parents, can present a safeguarding concern.

Behaviour incidents

We also ask that, if you become aware of a behaviour incident, or have any concerns about the behaviour of groups of pupils or specific pupils, you please raise these with the school directly.

Posting about incidents or behaviour concerns on social media limits the school's ability to conduct a full and fair investigation.

We appreciate your help in providing a supportive, respectful environment for all of our pupils, parents and staff.

Sincerely,

Cathy Dunleavy
Headteacher

[add links to our school's ICT and Acceptable Internet Use agreements, Communication Policy and Complaints Policy.](#)