

ST ANDREW'S METHODIST PRIMARY SCHOOL



Social Networking

Reviewed September January 2026

Headteacher

Anne Barker

Chair/Vice Chair of Governing Board

Margaret Hughes

Date of Next Review January 2028

This policy has been scrutinized to ensure it meets the requirements of the single equality duties. The school will make every reasonable adjustment to comply with the duties and actively avoid discrimination.

Introduction to the Policy

As a school, we recognize the many opportunities and learning opportunities provided by the internet. This includes the use of social networking sites. Our school Christian vision, **'Striving for excellence, together as one with God'** reflects the need to network with partners in order to grow and improve. Alongside this, however, there is an expectation that all are treated with dignity and respect and can flourish and form healthy relationships. It is crucial, therefore, that we are of the dangers associated with inappropriate use of social networking. The school is aware and acknowledges that increasing numbers of adults and children are using social networking sites. The two with the widest use are Facebook and Twitter.

The widespread availability and use of social networking applications bring opportunities to understand, engage and communicate with audiences in new ways. It is important that we can use these technologies and services effectively and flexibly. However, it is also important to ensure that we balance this with our reputation.

This policy and associated guidance are to protect staff and advise school leadership on how to deal with potential inappropriate use of social networking sites. For example, our use of social networking applications has implications for our duty to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults. The policy requirements in this document aim to provide this balance to support innovation whilst providing a framework of good practice.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure:

- That the school is not exposed to legal risks
- That the reputation of the school is not adversely affected
- That our users are able to clearly distinguish where information provided via social networking applications is legitimately representative of the school.

Facebook is targeted at older teenagers and adults. They have a no under 13 registration policy and recommend parental guidance for 13- to 16-year-olds. Twitter is open to all. (There are many primary age pupils active on Facebook.)

This guidance is to advise and protect staff and children from online dangers and bullying.

SCOPE

This policy covers the use of social networking applications, including micro-blogging platforms such as Twitter, by all school stakeholders, including employees, governors and pupils. These groups are referred to collectively as 'school representatives' for brevity.

The requirements of this policy apply to all uses of social networking applications which are used for any school related purpose and regardless of whether the school representatives are contributing in an official capacity to social networking applications provided by external organisations.

Social networking applications include, but are not limited to:

- Blogs, for example Blogger
- Online discussion forums, such as netmums.com
- Collaborative spaces, such as Facebook
- Media sharing services, for example YouTube
- 'Micro-blogging' applications, for example Twitter

All school representatives should bear in mind that information they share through social networking applications, even if they are on private spaces, are still subject to copyright, data protection and Freedom of Information legislation, the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 and other legislation. They must also operate in line with the School's Equality and Diversity Policy.

Use of Social networking sites in work time

Use of social networking applications in work time for personal use only is not permitted, unless permission has been given by the Head teacher.

Social Networking as part of School Service

- All proposals for using social networking applications as part of a school service (whether they are hosted by the school or by a third party) must be approved by the Head teacher first.
- Use of social networking applications which are not related to any school services (for example, contributing to a wiki provided by a professional association) does not need to be approved by the Head teacher. However, school representatives must still operate in line with the requirements set out within the policy
- School representatives must adhere to the following Terms of Use. The Terms of Use below apply to all uses of social networking applications by all school representatives. This includes, but is not limited to, public facing applications such as open discussion forums and internally facing uses such as project blogs regardless of whether they are hosted on school network or not.
- Where applications allow the posting of messages online, users must be mindful that the right to freedom of expression attaches only to lawful conduct. St Andrew's Methodist Primary School expects that users of social networking applications will always exercise the right of freedom of expression with due consideration for the rights of others and strictly in accordance with these Terms of Use.

Terms of Use

Social Networking applications:

- Must not be used to publish any content, which may result in actions for defamation, discrimination, breaches of copyright, data protection or other claim for damages. This includes but is not limited to material of an illegal, sexual or offensive nature that may bring the school into disrepute.

*All parents/carers are required to sign an agreement regarding the acceptable use of social network sites at the beginning of each school year, and to make themselves familiar with this policy. (See Appendix 1)

- Must not be used for the promotion of personal financial interests, commercial ventures or personal campaigns.
- Must not be used in an abusive or hateful manner.
- Must not be used for actions that would put school representatives in breach of school codes of conduct or policies relating to staff.
- Must not breach the school's misconduct, equal opportunities or bullying and harassment policies.
- Must not be used to discuss or advise any matters relating to school matters, staff, pupils or parents.
- No staff member should have a pupil or former pupil under the age of 18 as a 'friend' to share information with.
- Employees should not identify themselves as a representative of the school
- References should not be made to any staff member, pupil, parent or school activity / event unless prior permission has been obtained and agreed with the Head Teacher.
- Staff should be aware that if their out-of-work activity causes potential embarrassment for the employer or detrimentally affects the employer's reputation, then the employer is entitled to take disciplinary action. Violation of this policy will be considered gross misconduct and can result in disciplinary action being taken against the employee up to and including termination of employment.

Guidance/protection for staff on using social networking

- No member of staff should interact with any pupil on social networking sites
- No member of staff should interact with any ex-pupil in the school on social networking sites who is under the age of 18.
- This means that no member of the school staff should request access to a pupil's area on the social networking site. Neither should they permit the pupil access to the staff members' area, e.g. by accepting them as a friend.
- Where family and friends have pupils in school and there are legitimate family links, please inform the Headteacher. However, it would not be appropriate to network during the working day on either school or personal equipment.
- It is illegal for an adult to network, giving their age and status as a child.

If you have any evidence of pupils or adults using social networking sites in the working day, please contact the named Child Protection person in school.

Guidance/protection for Pupils on using social networking

- No pupil under 13 should be accessing social networking sites. This is the guidance from Facebook. There is a mechanism on Facebook where pupils can be reported via the Help screen; at the time of writing this policy the direct link for this is: http://www.facebook.com/help/contact.php?show_form=underage

- Other than accessing the school blog under the supervision of a member of staff, no pupil may access social networking sites during the school working day
- Children are not permitted to bring mobile phones to school. Where a child has to travel some distance, parents may formally request that their child may bring a phone. If the Headteacher agrees to this, all mobile phones must be handed to the class at the beginning of the school day, the Internet capability must be switched off. Failure to follow this guidance will result in a total ban for the child using a mobile phone. Please refer to Mobile Phone Policy.
*Please note any pupils who are in school before the start and after the end of the school day should not be accessing or playing on mobile phones. This includes children of school staff.
- Other than the school Twitter blog, under teacher supervision, no school computers are to be used to access social networking sites at any time of day.

Any attempts to breach firewalls will result in a ban from using school IT equipment other than with close supervision

Please report any improper contact or cyber bullying to your class teacher in confidence as soon as it happens. We have zero tolerance to cyber bullying.

Child protection guidance

If the Headteacher receives a disclosure that an adult employed by the school is using a social networking site in an inappropriate manner as detailed above she will:

- Record the disclosure in line with their child protection policy. Schools must refer the matter to the LADO who will investigate via Salford's Child Protection Team.
- If the disclosure has come from a parent, take normal steps to calm the parent and explain processes.
- If disclosure comes from a member of staff, try to maintain confidentiality. The LADO will advise whether the member of staff should be suspended pending investigation after contact with the police. It is not recommended that action is taken until advice has been given.
- If disclosure is from a child, follow your normal process in your child protection policy until the police investigation has been carried out.

Cyber Bullying

By adopting the recommended no use of social networking sites on school premises, St Andrew's Methodist Primary School protects themselves from accusations of complicity in any cyber bullying through the provision of access. Read in conjunction with the Online-Safety policy, Monitoring and filtering policy and Anti-bullying 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.

APPENDIX 1

Inappropriate use of Social Network Sites

Social media websites are being used increasingly to fuel campaigns and complaints against schools, headteachers, school staff, and in some cases, other parents and/or pupils. The governors of St Andrew's Methodist Primary School considers the use of social media websites in this way as unacceptable and not in the best interests of the children, staff or the whole school community.

Any concerns you may have must be made through the appropriate channels by speaking to the class teacher, the Headteacher or the Chair of Governors, so they can be dealt with fairly, appropriately and effectively for all concerned.

In the event that any pupil* or parent/carer of a child/ren being educated at St Andrew's Methodist Primary School is found to be posting libellous or defamatory comments on Facebook, Twitter or any other social network sites, they will be reported to the appropriate 'report abuse' section of the network site. All social network sites have clear rules about the content which can be posted on the site, and they provide robust mechanisms to report contact or activity which breaches this. The school will also expect that any parent/carer or pupil removes such comments immediately.

In extreme cases the school will also consider legal options to deal with any such misuse of social networking and other sites. Additionally, and perhaps more importantly, is the issue of cyber bullying and the use by a child or a parent to publicly humiliate a pupil or a member of staff by an inappropriate social network entry. This will be dealt with as a serious incident of school bullying. Thankfully such incidents are extremely rare.

Advice from Salford CC states that making defamatory or offensive comments on the internet has the same serious legal consequences as if they are made directly to the person. Legal action could be taken against the person who has made the comment.

Please note that any photos taken at school related events (trips, concerts etc) should NOT be posted on social networking sites if they show any other child apart from your own.

Further Questions

If parents have further questions, they can contact Mrs L Utzeri at the school; the NSPCC has a parent online safety helpline, which can help with general issues that are not school specific.

Staff should speak to Mrs L Utzeri in the first instance, who may then call on the expertise of local authority advisers or Professionals' Online-Safety Helpline (from UK SIC).

