



Guidance for dealing with the misuse of social media



Adopted: July 2025

Review Date: July 2027

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Internet, social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, TikTok and X and sharing sites such as YouTube and Snapchat are widely used. This type of media allows people to communicate in ways that were not previously possible. However, such sites are used by some as a means of expressing negative or offensive views about schools and their staff; endangering children's safety or unfairly damaging the reputation of the school.
- 1.2 This guidance is intended for parents, carers, and other members of the school community. It outlines the expectations for respectful online behaviour and the procedures the school will follow in response to the misuse of social media.

2. The school's complaints policy

- 2.1 Social networking sites are not the forum in which parents should be raising issues about the school.
- 2.2 The School encourages parents and other members of the school community to speak to school staff directly and all staff will accommodate parents as best they can to meet with them.
- 2.3 Should parents have concerns or complaints regarding school staff, procedure or process, then they should follow the school's complaints policy.
- 2.4 Often, it is appropriate for initial concerns to be raised with the class teacher, as concerns can usually be dealt with quickly and misunderstandings cleared up.

3. Responding to inappropriate posting by parents/carers

If an inappropriate comment/image/video is posted online about the school or its staff, the school's response will depend upon varying factors, such as the nature of the material posted; the type of site etc.

- 3.1 The school will make initial contact with Warwickshire ICT Development Team, however, the school may also seek advice from its legal representatives should the circumstances warrant this.
- 3.2 In most cases, the school will first look to discuss the matter with the parent/carer and ask them to remove the material in question.
- 3.3 Following discussion with the parent/carer, should the posts either not be removed or continue, then the school will write to the parent/carer.
- 3.4 If steps 3.2 - 3.3 have not resolved the issue, the school will consider instructing its legal representatives to make contact with the parent directly.
- 3.5 Where the material posted raises any safeguarding concerns, the school will follow the normal safeguarding process.

- 3.6 In some cases, the school may wish to contact the website operator and ask them to remove the material or ask their legal representatives to do this on their behalf.
- 3.7 At present, there is no single piece of legislation in the UK that is specifically designed to deal with inappropriate postings on social networking sites. However, there are several crimes that could be committed by inappropriate use of social media. In such circumstances, the school should consider reporting the matter to the Police. In addition, repeated incidents of behaviour amounting to harassment, or causing a person to fear that violence will be used against them, can amount to a criminal offence and would be reported to the Police.
- 3.8 In some cases, even if a crime has not been committed the school may apply to court for a civil injunction against the person causing the harassment.
- NB. Section three is not an exhaustive list of actions available to the school and other legal avenues may be deemed appropriate. Each instance will be dealt with on a case by case basis.