



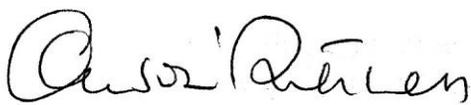
Kintbury St Mary's CE Primary School

Social Networking – Advice for Schools

**for Community, Voluntary Controlled, Community Special and
Maintained Schools**

Document Control

Document Ref:	HRCC	Date Created:	April 2011
Version:	V 1.0	Date Modified:	
Revision due			
Author:	West Berkshire Council		

Headteacher	Sign & Date:	 12 December 2018
Chair of Governing Body	Sign & Date:	 12 December 2018

Change History

Version	Date	Description	Change ID
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1. Introduction

- 1.1. The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to schools on the appropriate use of social networking by school staff.
- 1.2. The governing body may wish to approve additional guidance after consultation with staff and relevant professional associations to meet the operational needs of the school.

2. Purpose

- 2.1. The purpose of this advice note is to guide the judgements of management and staff using social networking sites and the information that they provide through these by:
 - 2.11 Advising management and staff to ensure that children are safeguarded
 - 2.12 Advising management and staff to ensure that the reputation of the school is not adversely affected through use of social networking sites.
 - 2.13 Ensuring that the school is not subject to legal challenge as a result of school employees using and providing information on social networking sites e.g. data protection, discrimination and other sensitive information.
- 2.2 School managers should make all staff aware of this advice note and the expectations of staff conduct related to social networking. For new staff this should form part of their induction.

3. Social Networking Sites / Applications

- 3.1 Social networking applications include, but are not limited to: Blogs, Online discussion forums, Collaborative spaces, Media sharing services, 'Microblogging' applications. Examples include Twitter, Facebook, MSN, You Tube.

4. Staff Conduct

- 4.1 The West Berkshire Model Code of Conduct for schools (paragraph 4.1) states "*In general terms, the school expects that the conduct of its employees is such that no justifiable complaint can be made by parents, pupils, colleagues, Governors, other bodies or agencies or members of the community in relation to conduct and behaviour of school staff.*" This principle applies to the use of social networking sites.

- 4.2 The way in which school staff present and conduct themselves on social networking sites can have an impact on the public perception of the school and influence the way in which those staff members are perceived by pupils and parents of the school. In their use of social networking sites, staff should be aware that their online behaviour could affect their professional standing, dignity and perception of their integrity.
- 4.3 It is recommended that school staff take adequate precautions when using social networking sites/applications, both in vetting material that could be connected to them (through their own profile and information added about them) and through the use of appropriate security settings.
- 4.4 It is recommended that school employees should not be “friends” with pupils on social networking sites as this could be viewed as a safeguarding issue.
- 4.5 It is recommended that management and school staff do not identify their school on social networking sites as this could directly link their behaviour outside of work with the reputation of the school.
- 4.6 It is recommended that the school identifies a member of their senior leadership team from whom staff can seek advice on their personal use of social networking sites and/or report concerns about the inappropriate use of a social networking site/application by another member of staff.
- 4.7 Where schools use email and learning platforms to communicate with pupils, e.g. about homework, the Headteacher should set out local guidance around the use of these applications for both pupils and staff.
- 4.8 Where pupils behave inappropriately with staff this should be reported to a member of the senior leadership team and dealt with through the school’s pupil disciplinary process.
- 4.8 The Model Disciplinary Rules state that the follow are examples of gross misconduct:
 - 4.8.1 (paragraph 5.2) *Conduct that is a serious abuse of position – e.g. entering into a personal relationship with a pupil.*
 - 4.8.2 (paragraph 5.10) *Criminal offences and other conduct outside employment could cause an employee’s position at the school to become untenable particularly in circumstances where the conduct or offence is unacceptable to colleagues, management or parents or where the conduct or offence has the potential to affect the reputation of the school.*
 - 4.8.3 (paragraph 5.11) *Making defamatory statements in the course of employment (e.g. making statements that are or could be slanderous or libellous) whether orally, written, or in electronic communication.*

4.9 Breach of these disciplinary rules in the section above (4.8) in relation to social networking or any inappropriate use of social networking sites and applications by staff will be dealt with through the School's Disciplinary Procedure.