

**Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council**

# **Thornaby CE Primary School**

## **Social Networking Policy**



**Mission Statement:**

Recognising its historic foundation, the school will preserve and develop its religious character in accordance with the principles of the Church of England and in partnership with the Church at Parish and Diocesan level.

The School aims to serve its community by providing an education of the highest quality within the context of Christian belief and practice. It encourages an understanding of the meaning and significance of faith and promotes Christian values through the experience it offers to all its pupils.

**We work together to enrich learning, enhance life, to build a future of hope for everyone.**

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## Social Networking Policy for Staff in Schools

### 1.0 Introduction

The Governing Body of Thornaby Church of England Primary School is committed to ensuring that all staff are aware of their responsibilities in connection with the growing use of social networking sites. It recognises that the use of such sites have become a very significant part of life for many people. They provide a positive way to keep in touch with friends and colleagues, and can be used to exchange ideas and thoughts on common interests. Examples of such sites include, but are not limited to, blogs (short for web log), MySpace, Facebook, Bebo, YouTube, Windows Live Spaces, MSN, forums, bulletin boards, multiplayer online gaming, chatrooms and instant messenger.

Staff are expected to keep a professional distance from pupils and there should be a clear separation of the private social lives of staff and that of pupils. There is no need for social networking to go on between staff and pupils and there is no clear educational benefit.

It is important that staff are able to use technologies and services effectively and flexibly whilst ensuring that they do not make themselves vulnerable. However, it is also important to ensure that this is balanced with the Governing Body's duty to safeguard children, the reputation of the school, the wider community and the Local Authority.

### 2.0 Who does this policy apply to?

This policy will apply to all staff in schools whose contracts of employment have been issued by the Local Authority on behalf of the Governing Body, including Community and VA Schools. It does not apply to supply staff employed by agencies. (These staff should follow agency policy a copy of which will be requested by the school.)

Students should follow college/own school policy where relevant. All students are reminded of the need for strict confidentiality in their induction meeting.

### 3.0 Aims

The policy aims to:

- Enable employees to use social networking sites safely and securely.
- Ensure that employees are aware of the risks associated with the inappropriate use of social networking sites.
- Safeguard employees in connection with the use of social networking sites and ensure they do not make themselves vulnerable.
- Ensure the Governing Body maintains its duty to safeguard children, the reputation of the school, the wider community and the Local Authority.

## **4.0 Legislation**

The following legislation must be considered when adhering to this policy:

- Human Rights Act 1998
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Computer Misuse Act 1990, amended by the Police and Justice Act 2006

## **5.0 Responsibilities**

### **5.1 The Governing Body (in conjunction with the Local Authority) shall:**

- Ensure this policy is implemented and procedures are in place that deal with the use of social networking sites.
- Ensure that all employees have access to this policy and that new employees are made aware of it.

### **5.2 Headteachers/Line Managers shall:**

- Be familiar with this policy and guidelines and ensure that employees understand the policy and their own responsibilities.
- Ensure that staff are aware of the risks of the use of social networking sites and the possible implications of the inappropriate use of them.
- Instigate disciplinary procedures where appropriate to do so.
- Seek advice where necessary from Human Resources on the approach to be adopted if they are made aware of any potential issue.

### **5.3 Staff shall:**

- Behave responsibly and professionally at all times in connection with the use of social networking sites.
- Co-operate with management in ensuring the implementation of this policy.
- All staff must accept and comply with the terms of the Social Networking Policy.

### **5.4 Human Resources shall:**

- Provide the necessary professional advice and support to the Governing Body and all school staff when required.

### **5.5 Parents shall:**

- Encourage children to use the internet and other technology responsibly by following the guidelines and recommendations set by the school and outlined in this policy.
- Take ultimate responsibility to closely monitor their son/daughter's use of technology outside of school - including use of mobile phones, the internet etc. If they have evidence of cyber-bullying involving school

pupils and feel unable to resolve the matter themselves, they should liaise directly with the school (normally via the class teacher first) about how best to proceed.

## **6.0 Use of Social Networking Sites**

For employees' own security all communication via social networking sites should be made with the awareness that anything said, shown or received could be made available, intentionally or otherwise, to an audience wider than that originally intended. It is therefore advised that staff follow the following procedures:

- All staff must accept and comply with the terms of the Social Networking Policy.
- Staff must not access social networking sites for personal use via school information systems or using school equipment.
- Staff must not accept pupils as friends - personal communication could be considered inappropriate and unprofessional and makes staff vulnerable to allegations.
- Staff are strongly advised not to be friends with recent pupils. The potential for staff to be compromised in terms of wall content and open to accusations makes the risk not worth taking.
- Staff should not place inappropriate photographs on any social network space.
- Staff should not post indecent remarks.
- If a member of staff receives messages on his/her social networking profile that they think could be from a pupil they must report it to their Line Manager/Headteacher and contact the internet service or social networking provider so that they can investigate and take the appropriate action.
- Staff are advised not to write about their work but where a member of staff chooses to do so, he/she should make it clear that the views expressed are his/hers only and do not reflect the views of the school/Local Authority. However, all other guidelines in this policy must be adhered to when making any reference to the workplace.
- Staff must not disclose any information that is confidential to the school or disclose personal data or information about any individual/colleague/pupil, which could be in breach of the Data Protection Act.
- Staff must not disclose any information about the school/Local Authority that is not yet in the public arena.
- In no circumstances should staff post photographs of pupils.
- Staff should not make defamatory remarks about the school/colleagues/pupils or the Local Authority or post anything that could potentially bring the school/Local Authority into disrepute.
- Staff should not disclose confidential information relating to his/her employment at the school.

- Care should be taken to avoid using language which could be deemed as offensive to others.
- Staff are strongly encouraged to check the security settings on their own personal profiles on social networking sites and ensure that the general public can only access a 'Limited' amount of information.
- School staff must not add children and are strongly advised not to add parents of children currently attending the school to their personal social networking profiles (except in the case where parents are also members of staff - in such cases these staff members must not share/show the information to their children)
- Staff should ensure that computers are either locked or logged off when not in use.
- All parents to be advised by the school against placing photographs taken at school events on social networking sites.

### **7.0 Breaches of the Policy**

The Governing Body does not discourage staff from using social networking sites. However, all staff should be aware that the Governing Body will take seriously any occasions where the services are used inappropriately. If occasions arise of what could be deemed to be online bullying or harassment, these will be dealt with in the same way as other such instances.

If any instances of the inappropriate use of social networking sites are brought to the attention of the Headteacher, depending on the seriousness of the allegations, disciplinary action may be taken.

There may be instances where the School or Local Authority will be obliged to inform the police of any activity or behaviour for which there are concerns as to its legality.

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**Revised March 2016 to be revised March 2018**