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**Toftwood Infant and Junior School Federation  
Executive Headteacher - Mrs Joanna Pedlow**

### **Social Networking Policy for Staff, Governors and Volunteers**

#### **Introduction**

The Governing Body of Toftwood Infant and Junior School Federation is committed to ensuring that all staff are aware of their responsibilities in connection with the use of social networking sites. It recognises that the use of such sites are a very significant part of life for many people. They provide a positive way to keep in touch with friends and family, and can be used to exchange ideas and thoughts on common interests.

Examples of such sites include, but are not limited to: Vlogs, blogs, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, SnapChat, 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 Board's duty to safeguard children, the reputation of the schools, the wider community and the Local Authority.

Social networking sites are not an appropriate place to raise concerns, express certain views or give feedback.

#### **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 Board. It also applies in part to Governors as specified. There is also a section relating specifically to Parent Helpers, Volunteers, Students and Supply Staff who may have contact with children on a regular basis. There is also a section specifically for parents and carers.

#### **Aims**

This policy aims to:

- Enable employees to use social networking sites appropriately, safely and securely;
- Ensure that employees are aware of the risks associated with the inappropriate use of social networking sites;
- To safeguard employees in connection with the use of social networking sites and ensure they do not make themselves vulnerable;
- To ensure the Governing Board maintains its duty to safeguard children, the reputation of the school, the wider community and the Local Authority.
- To ensure that positive feedback is shared appropriately and any problems are addressed swiftly.

#### **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
- Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA)

## Responsibilities

The Governing Board 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.

SLT/Governors 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.

Staff shall:

- Behave responsibly and professionally at all times in connection with the use of social networking sites;
- Co-operate with school leaders in ensuring the implementation of this policy.

## Use of Social Networking Sites

For employees' and Governors 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 important that staff and Governors follow the following procedures:

- Staff and Governors must not access social networking sites for personal use via school information systems, or using school equipment;
- Staff and Governors must ensure their pages are locked down and accessible only to their friends. Their 'wall' should only have their name and appropriate photograph on it, and clearly state that the user does not share information publicly,
- Staff and Governors should not mention their place of work on their sites/pages;
- Staff and Governors are advised not to accept friend requests from parents in the school. It is not appropriate in a professional working relationship. If a staff member or Governor has a personal friend who happens to be a parent in the school, they should consider carefully if accepting them as a friend is appropriate and if so consider carefully the content of what is put on their pages,
- Staff and Governors must not accept pupils as friends - personal communication could be considered inappropriate and unprofessional and makes staff vulnerable to allegations;
- Staff and Governors must not accept students who they meet as part of their work in the school from High Schools and Colleges as friends. Staff and Governors are there in a position of trust and as a mentor and educator and it would be inappropriate for such a student to be privy to personal information about a staff member through this medium.
- Staff and Governors are advised not to be friends with recent pupils. The potential for staff and Governors to be compromised in terms of wall content and open to accusations makes the risk not worth taking;
- Staff and Governors should not place inappropriate photographs on any social network space; e.g. photos that compromise their professional integrity or the reputation of the school,
- Staff and Governors should not post or respond to indecent remarks or remarks that could be considered derogatory to others;
- If a member of staff or Governor receives messages on their social networking profile that they think could be from a pupil they must report it to the SLT or Chair of Governors and contact the internet service or social networking provider so that they can investigate and take the appropriate action;
- Staff and Governors are not allowed to write about their work or the children or staff in the school relating to any work based situation. Confidentiality applies in this case, and disciplinary action may be taken if necessary
- Staff and Governors 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 and Governors must not disclose any information about the school/Local Authority that is not yet in the public arena;
- In no circumstances should staff or Governors post photographs of pupils;
- Staff and Governors should not post pictures of other staff and Governors on social occasions without their permission;
- Staff and Governors 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 and Governors 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 and Governors should adhere to the LA code of conduct and teachers must additionally adhere to the Teachers' Standards and all staff should adhere to the Governors' Code of Conduct for Staff.

### **Breaches of the Policy**

The Governing Board does not discourage or prevent staff from using social networking sites. However, all staff should be aware that the Governing Board 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.

Under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA), the Executive Headteacher can exercise his/her right to monitor the use of the school's information systems and internet access where he/she believes unauthorised use may be taking place; to ensure compliance with regulatory practices; to ensure standards of service are maintained; to prevent or detect crime; to protect the communication system and to pick up messages when someone is away from school. If any such monitoring detects the unauthorised use of social networking sites disciplinary action will be taken. If any instances of the inappropriate use of social networking sites are brought to the attention of the Executive 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.

### **Parent Helpers, Volunteers, Students and Supply Staff who may have contact with children on a regular basis**

The use of social networking sites by those mentioned above cannot be as strictly regulated but some of these rules still apply.

In addition, these groups should never:

- Discuss anything that is seen or heard at the schools on any form of social networking site
- Express opinions about the schools that could cause offence, bring the schools into disrepute or affect confidentiality of the schools or those within it
- Take any photographs of federation events or activities they are involved with as a volunteer/student or use them on any form of social networking site or share them publicly;
- Use their mobile phone or other personal device whilst acting as a volunteer/student for social networking activity

These groups must:

- Adhere strictly to the confidentiality agreement signed when volunteering in the schools which outlines expectations including that of use of social networking sites

### **Parents and Carers**

Parents and carers of children at the schools must also be aware that police action and/or legal advice will be taken in relation to the following activities on social networking sites:

- Comments that are derogatory to the staff, children and members of the school community
- Threats of any kind against any staff member or pupil
- Comments that could bring the schools into disrepute
- Untrue comments about the schools, its staff or its community
- Photos taken at federation events of children that are not their own and have been posted without the parents' express permission
- Comments relating to the general workings of the schools.
- Parents should remember that things that happen in school are confidential and should not be shared on social networking sites.

### **Equality Impact Statement**

The Governors have reviewed this policy giving due regard to their responsibilities with respect to the equalities agenda, in line with legislation. They believe that the policy reflects a positive attitude and approach to all members of the school community.

See also:

- Volunteer and work experience policy
- Confidentiality agreement
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Governors' Code of Conduct for Staff

Chair of Governors .....Executive Headteacher.....

Agreed by the governing board on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2017