Social Media Policy

This policy was written in conjunction with members of the North Down Primary Principal Group.

Mission Statement

As a school we wish to uphold a positive image with all stakeholders; pupils, staff, parents, governors and community members. We strive to create an environment where there is mutual respect, where each person is valued as an individual and pastoral care is an integral part of education. Each pupil will be encouraged to fulfill his or her moral, intellectual, spiritual, physical, social, aesthetic and emotional potential.

Use of ICT allows all pupils to gain confidence and ability in an ever-changing society and prepares them for the challenge of a rapidly developing and evolving technological world. Using ICT aims:

- To provide opportunities to enable all our staff, pupils and parents to be confident, competent and independent users of ICT.
- To provide an environment where access to ICT resources is natural and commonplace.
- To ensure ICT has a fundamental role in developing and enhancing our school's key learning aims in promoting the pupils' educational, physical and social needs.
- To encourage our staff and pupils to work collaboratively.

Social Networking

Social networking is everywhere. It is common to find parents, children, co-workers and others on such sites. With social networks people across the world have access to tools and options that were previously non-existent. Whilst this allows many new opportunities to connect there are also potential dangers. It is a platform where almost anybody can see what we are doing. While tagging photos of friends or posting comments, it can be easily overlooked that someone else who has been invited onto a social networking site can also view them. Often there is a minimal amount of control over who ultimately gets to see items posted.

Once something appears on the Internet, it's almost impossible to remove. As these sites continue to grow in popularity, so too does the value of the information on them to parties other than those directly involved. Social networking users need to reflect about what they are posting onto the Internet.

Those associated with Holywood Primary School and work with children and young people, should be extremely careful in corresponding with people on social networking sites. They should always maintain appropriate professional boundaries, avoid improper contact or relationships and respect their position of trust.

With regard to relationships, individuals who work with children and young people staff, parents, carers or volunteers should not attempt to establish a relationship, which might include:

- communication of a personal nature
- inappropriate dialogue through the internet
- the sending of emails or text messages of an inappropriate nature

The following is **not considered acceptable** at Holywood Primary School:

- Disclosure of confidential or business-sensitive information; or the disclosure of information or images that could compromise the security of the school.

- Personal contact details including email, home or mobile telephone numbers should not be given unless the need to do so is agreed by the Principal.

- Accessing social networking accounts of pupils.

- Making, viewing or accessing, illegal or inappropriate images of children.

Responsibilities of staff.
Staff relationships with children and young people should, at all times, remain professional. They should **not** correspond with children and young people through social media sites or add them as 'friends'. It is worth bearing in mind that, on such sites, an inappropriate or even misconstrued communication may have the potential to impact upon their careers, or even result in criminal investigation.

In addition, staff should bear in mind **who** may access their own profiles on such websites. Staff should therefore take care as to the information they display about themselves, their personal lives and should not make any reference to school or individuals within it. They should also ensure that they have installed, and are using, the highest level of privacy settings.

Staff should not post any images of employees, children, governors or anyone directly connected with the school whilst engaged in school activities without prior permission from the Principal. Before posting any images of school community members taken at events not related to school, for example at social events, permission should be directly sought from the parties involved.

Responsibilities of parents/carers/ school volunteers

Parents, carers and school volunteers will be made aware of their responsibilities regarding their use of social networking. Methods of school communication include the prospectus, the website, newsletters, letters and verbal discussion. Pictures taken of pupils within the school setting /at school events should not be posted on social networking sites without parents' permission. No child should ever be identified using both their forename and surname. Before posting any images of school community members taken at events not related to school, for example at social events, permission should be directly sought from the parties involved.

Good Practice Guidelines for Social Media Use:

A general set of guidelines that staff and those involved in Holywood Primary School consider:

- Staff are free to use and access social media.
- Staff should not, however, use their personal accounts to post any school related content such as comments, photos, videos etc
- Staff should not identify the school in any way on their personal Facebook Pages i.e. 'Place of Work' reference etc.
- Staff should not name or mention any pupil or colleague using their personal social networking accounts.
- Privacy settings should be set appropriately to prevent non-friends from accessing any private or personal information; despite this staff should also be aware that social networking will never be completely private and to avoid complications they should behave online in a similar fashion as they would offline.
- Any personal online activity which brings (or may bring) the school into disrepute may result in the invoking of the Disciplinary Procedure and in the worst cases may result in dismissal.
- In line with DE and union advice staff should also endeavour not to be 'friends' (or similar) with parents. There may be occasion for reasonable exception to this guidance for i.e. parents who also work in school as colleagues or existing friends who then enrol pupils in the school. Staff should treat this guidance with caution and be cognisant of the potential complications that may come from social media interaction with parents online.
- Staff should not be 'friends' (or similar) with any pupil, past or present, until they reach the approved age of adulthood (18). Staff should also be aware of the potential complications that could arise from such interaction even once an individual reaches the age of 18 and should consider their actions carefully.

Staff, parents, carers and school volunteers

In Conclusion

- No complaints should be made in public through social media as they can be re detrimental and possibly damaging to the school community and as such are not beneficial to the children.
  (N.B Any complaint should be addressed by following the process outlined on the school Complaints Policy.)

- Parents/carers/school volunteers should not post inaccurate, malicious or fictitious comments on social networking sites about any member of the school community or any school policy, process or procedure.

- Malicious or inappropriate comments will be reported and may result in accounts being removed. Fictitious or defamatory comments may also result in legal action.

- Action will also be taken if any inappropriate comments are made in which a member of the school community can be identified from the content of the comment.

- The Board of Governors will take appropriate action in order to protect the school's reputation and that of its staff, parents, Governors, children and anyone else directly linked to the school. Where appropriate, comments will be reported to the PSNI.

To support the pupils of Holywood Primary School and using guidance from DENI, Education Authority and outside agencies, members of staff will give clarity to pupils and parents / carers about the acceptable use of the Internet and mobile devices by children whilst in Holywood Primary School.

Parents and carers have full responsibility for their child's use of the Internet, mobile devices and social networks outside 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, Twitter and MSN. There is a mechanism on Facebook, Twitter and

Instagram where pupils can be reported via the Help screen.

http://www.facebook.com/help/contact.php?show_form=underage

https://help.twitter.com/forms/privacy

https://help.instagram.com/contact/723586364339719

Policy created: 2015

Reviewed: 2019

Review: 2022