

Grangefield School Social Media Policy.

Overview

Social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter are now widely used. These types of networks allow people to communicate in ways that were not previously possible. We recognise such sites can have very beneficial features if used appropriately. However, such sites can be inappropriately used by some as a means of expressing negative or offensive views about schools, their staff and pupils. This document sets out Grangefield School's approach to the use of such sites and the procedures we will follow, and action we may take, when we consider that these sites and networks have been used inappropriately. When we have referred to "users" in this document, we include parents and or carers; relatives; or anyone associated with the School.

Staff members use of social media is covered by a separate policy listed at the end of this document along with other relevant policies and links.

Objectives

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Encourage social networking sites to be used in a beneficial and positive way by all;
- Safeguard pupils, staff and anyone associated with the school from the negative effects of social networking sites;
- Safeguard the reputation of the School from unwarranted abuse on social networking sites;
- Clarify what the School considers to be appropriate and inappropriate use of social networking sites;
- Set out the procedures the School will follow where it considers someone has inappropriately or unlawfully used social networking sites to the detriment of the School, its staff or its pupils, and anyone else associated with the School;
- Set out the action the School will consider taking if anyone makes inappropriate use of social networking sites in relation to the school.

Appropriate use of social networking sites

Social networking sites have potential to enhance the learning and achievement of pupils and enable parents to access information about the School and provide feedback efficiently and easily. In addition, the School recognises that many parents, pupils and other family members will have personal social networking accounts, which they might use to discuss/share views about school issues with friends and acquaintances.

As a guide, individuals should consider the following prior to posting any information on social networking sites about the School, its staff, its pupils, or anyone else associated with the School:

- Is the social networking site the appropriate channel to raise concerns, give this feedback or express these views?
- Social media/internet sites should not be used to name individuals and make abusive comments about those people. Please contact the school to discuss any concerns you may have.
- Are such comments likely to cause emotional or reputational harm to individuals, which would not be justified, particularly if the School has not yet had a chance to investigate a complaint in accordance with our established complaints policy and procedure.
- The reputational impact that the posting of such material may have to the School; any detrimental harm that the School may suffer as a result of the posting; and the impact that such a posting may have on pupils' learning.

Inappropriate use of social networking sites by parents

Although social networking sites may appear to be the quickest and easiest way to express frustrations or concerns about the School (and those associated with it), it is never appropriate to do so. Other channels, such as a private and confidential discussion with the School, or using the School's informal or formal complaints process are much better suited to this. The School considers the following examples to be inappropriate uses of social networking sites. (This list is non-exhaustive and intended to provide examples only):

- Making allegations about staff or pupils at the School
- Making complaints about the School/staff at the School;
- Making defamatory statements about the School, staff or pupils at the School;
- Posting negative/offensive comments about specific pupils/staff at the School;
- Posting discriminatory comments;
- Posting comments that threaten violence.

Parents should also ensure that their children are not using social networking/internet sites in an inappropriate manner. It is expected that parents/carers explain to their children what is acceptable to post online. Parents/carers are also expected to monitor their children's online activity, including in relation to their use of social media. The school will undertake e-safety sessions with pupils but also expects parents to reinforce the messages given in these sessions.

Procedure the School will follow if inappropriate use is suspected

The School will always try to deal with concerns raised in a professional and appropriate manner. Evidence will be gathered from all parties involved and considered by the Head Teacher or Chair of Governors. The school understands that parents may not always realise when social networking sites have been used inappropriately. Therefore, as a first step, the School will usually discuss the matter with them to try and resolve the matter and to ask that the relevant information be removed from the social networking site in question. If the request to remove the information is refused and use of social networking sites in a manner the School considers inappropriate continues, the School will consider taking the following action:

- Set out the School's concerns in writing, giving a warning to the individual and requesting that the material in question is removed;
- If the inappropriate comments have been made on a school website or online forum, the School may take action to block or restrict that individual's access to that website or forum;
- The school may contact the host/provider of the Social Networking site to complain about the content of the site and ask for removal of the information;
- Where the School feels it appropriate, it may contact the Police – for example, if it considers a crime (such as harassment) has been committed; or in cases where the posting has a racial/discriminatory element, is considered to be grossly obscene or is threatening violence;
- The school may take legal advice and/or legal action where the information posted is defamatory in any way or if the circumstances warrant this;

Where a pupil is involved in the matter, parents will be contacted and expected to cooperate with the school to enforce this policy.

Associated Policies and Guidance

Staff Acceptable Use Agreement

E Safety Policy

Safeguarding Policy

CEOP guidance

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