



Social Media Network Policy

Approved by: Headteacher

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Overview

Social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter are now widely used. This type of media allows people to communicate in ways that were not previously possible and can positively enhance communication. The school recognises that most stakeholders use social media in a positive and responsible manner. However, for a minority, such sites can be inappropriately used as a means of expressing negative or offensive views about school and their staff instead of approaching the school where the vast majority of concerns could easily be dealt with and resolved. This document sets out the school's approach to parental use of such sites and sets out the procedures we will follow and action we may take when we consider that parents have used such facilities inappropriately. When we have referred to "parent" in this document, we also include carers, relatives, or anyone associated with the school.

Objectives

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Encourage social networking sites to be used in a beneficial and positive way by parents
- Safeguard pupils, staff and anyone associated with the school from the potential 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 by parents
- Set out the procedures school will follow where it considers parents have 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 parents make inappropriate use of social networking sites

Appropriate use of social networking sites by parents

Social networking sites have potential to enhance the learning and achievement of pupils and enable parents to access information about school and provide feedback efficiently and easily. In addition, the school recognises that many parents 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 school, its staff, its pupils, or anyone else associated with it:

- Is the social networking site the appropriate channel to raise concerns, give this feedback or express these views?
- Would private and confidential discussions with school be more appropriate? E.g. if there are serious allegations being made/concerns being raised. Social media/internet sites should not be used to name individuals and make abusive comments about those people. Please contact 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 school has not yet had a chance to investigate a complaint?
- The reputational impact that the posting of such material may have to 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 school (and those associated with it), it is never appropriate to do so.

Where a parent has a concern, this must be made through the appropriate channels by speaking to the class teacher, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors so they can be dealt with fairly, appropriately and effectively for all concerned. (See Complaints Policy)

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 school or cyber-bullying
- Making complaints about the school or staff at Clapgate
- Making defamatory statements about school or staff
- Posting negative/offensive comments about specific pupils/staff at Clapgate
- Posting discriminatory comments, for example: sexist, racist, homophobic comments
- Posting comments which 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.

Procedure the school will follow if inappropriate use continues:

In the event that any pupil or parent/carer of a child/ren at Clapgate is found to be posting abusive comments (including libelous or defamatory comments) on Facebook or other social network sites, they will be reported to the appropriate 'report abuse' section of the network site. All social network sites have clear rules about the content which can be posted on the site and they provide robust mechanisms to report content or activity which breaches this. The school will also expect that any parent/carer removes such comments immediately and will be asked to attend a meeting with the Headteacher to discuss the breaking of the school rules and the possible repercussions of such action.

If the parent refuses to comply with these procedures and continues to use social networking sites in a manner the school considers inappropriate, the school will consider taking the following action:

- Take legal advice and/or legal action where the information posted is defamatory in any way or if the circumstances warrant this

- Set out the school's concerns to you in writing, giving you a warning and requesting that the material in question is removed
- Contact the police where the school feels it appropriate – for example, if it considers a crime (such as harassment) has been committed; or in cases where the posting has a discriminatory element or is threatening violence
- If the inappropriate comments have been made on a school forum, the school may take action to block or restrict that individual's access to that website or forum
- Contact the host/provider of the Social Networking site to complain about the content of the site and ask for removal of the information
- Take other legal action against the individual