

Use of Social Media

Guidance for Staff, Governors, Volunteers & Parents



Introduction

For the purpose of this policy, 'Social Media' is the term commonly used for websites which allow people to interact with each other in some way – by sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interests. Social networking websites such as Facebook, Bebo and MySpace are perhaps the most well-known examples of Social Media, but the term also covers other web-based services such as blogs, video and audio podcasts, wikis, message boards, photo documents and video sharing websites (such as YouTube) and micro blogging services (such as Twitter). This definition of social media is not exhaustive as technology develops with new ways of communicating advances every day. For the purpose of this document the terminology Social Media is not exhaustive and also applies to the use of communication technologies such as mobile phones, cameras, PDAs / PSPs or other handheld devices and any other emerging forms of communications technologies.

Key Principles

Staff and Governors at Bigland Green have a responsibility to ensure that they protect the reputation of the school, and to treat all members of the school community with respect. It is important to protect everyone from allegations and misinterpretations which can arise from the use of social networking sites.

Safeguarding children is fundamental to everything we do at school and it is essential that everyone at Bigland Green considers this and acts responsibly if they are using social networking sites out of school.

This policy guidance relates to social networking inside and outside of work.

Code of Conduct for Staff, Governors and Volunteers

Blogging and accessing social networking sites during working hours or using school equipment is not permitted unless on behalf of the school and with the permission of the Head Teacher and Governing Body.

The following are considered unacceptable at Bigland Green:

1. The use of the school's name, logo, or any other published material without written prior permission from the Head Teacher. This applies to any published material including the internet or written documentation.
2. The unauthorised posting of any images of employees, pupils, governors or anyone directly connected with the school whilst engaged in school activities.
3. The posting of any communication or images which links the school to any form of illegal conduct or which may damage the reputation of the school. This includes defamatory comments, discrimination, breaches of copyright, data protection or anything else that could lead to a claim for damages and/or bring the school into disrepute.
4. The disclosure of confidential or business-sensitive information; or the disclosure of information or images that could compromise the security of the school.
5. Staff should never 'friend' a pupil of the school onto their social networking site or interact with children who are not part of their immediate family.
6. Staff should never use or access social networking sites of pupils and should never accept an invitation to 'friend' a pupil.
7. The use of social media to discuss, advise or make references to any matters related to school activities/business, staff, pupils, parents or governors.
8. Any actions that breaches the school's code of conduct.

Staff should be aware that if their out-of-work activity causes potential embarrassment for the school or detrimentally effects the school's reputation then the Bigland Green is entitled to take disciplinary action. Violation of this policy will be considered as gross misconduct and can result in disciplinary action being taken against the employee up to and including termination of employment.

All mobile phones must be switched off during working hours. The use of mobile phones during break and lunchtime must be limited to the staff room, offices, and areas that are not used by the pupils. If a staff member expects an urgent call then their phone must be left in the school office.

No school computers are to be used to access social networking sites at any time of day.

Guidance for Parents/Guardians

Parents and guardians are requested to avoid the use of phones on the school premises. Before taking photos in school premises (e.g. in assemblies or other events) a pass must be obtained from the school office. Parents are expected to follow the guidance below:

1. Please refrain from the use the school name, logo or images of any pupils/staff/parents on any social media platform without the expressed consent of the Head Teacher of Bigland Green.
2. Do not make any derogatory, defamatory, rude, threatening or inappropriate comments about the school, or anyone at/or connected with the school.
3. Use existing channels for home-school communication and contact school if you feel ill-informed about school life, rather than using Social Media.

Potential and Actual Breaches of the Social Media Policy

In instances where there has been a breach of this Policy, the following will apply:

1. Any breaches of this policy will be fully investigated. Where it is found that there has been a breach of the policy this may result in action being taken.
 - a. A breach of this policy for staff will be considered to be a serious disciplinary offence which is also contrary to the school's ethos and principles.
 - b. A breach by a parent may result in their rights to take photos and/or use mobiles being taken away. Any criminal offences will be reported to the police.

The Governing Body will take appropriate action in order to protect the school's reputation and that of its staff, parents, governors, pupils and anyone else directly linked to the school.

Child protection guidance

If the head teacher receives a disclosure that an adult employed by the school is using a social networking site in an inappropriate manner as detailed above they will:

1. Record the disclosure in line with the school's safeguarding and child protection policy
2. Refer the matter to the Local Authority and/or the police as appropriate.
 - a. If the disclosure has come from a parent then explain processes that will be followed.
 - b. If disclosure comes from a member of staff then try to maintain confidentiality.
 - c. If disclosure is from a child, follow then follow the process described in the safeguarding and child protection policy until the police investigation has been carried out.

Date approved	Signature	Review
May 2022	B. A. Pailola	As required