



# *Barrowby Church of England Primary School*

## **Social Media Policy**

### **1. Introduction**

Barrowby Church of England Primary School recognises that many staff, governors, parents, carers and pupils use the internet for personal purposes and that they may participate in social networking on social media websites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, etc. In addition, staff, governors, parents and carers may set up personal weblogs or “blogs” on the internet.

1.1 Whilst staff, governors, parents and carers are free to use the internet in this way, they must ensure that they do not breach the law or disclose Barrowby Church of England Primary School’s confidential information, breach copyright, defame the school, its staff, governors, parents, carers and pupils. They must not:

- disclose personal data or information about any individual that could breach the Data Protection Act 1998 or Barrowby School’s E-Safety policy;
- bring the school into disrepute;
- make defamatory comments about individuals or other organisations or groups;
- post an image that is inappropriate or links to inappropriate content;
- breach confidentiality;
- give away confidential information about an individual or organisation;
- discuss our internal workings, such as plans that have not been communicated to the public;
- breach copyright, for example by using someone else's images or written content without permission;
- fail to acknowledge where we have permission to reproduce something;
- do anything that could be considered discriminatory, bullying or harassment of someone. For example, making offensive comments relating to any protected characteristic in law;
- use social media to bully another individual;
- post an image that is discriminatory or offensive or links to such content.

They should keep completely confidential, any information regarding the children, their families or other staff which is learned through the school.

1.2 This policy relates to material posted on public areas and those restricted to certain individuals and should be read in conjunction with:

- E Safety Policy
- E Safety Code of Conduct for iPad and Laptop
- ICT Procedures and Security Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct for Computing and Digital Media
- Staff Code of Conduct for iPad use

- 1.3 Our Social Media Policy has been written by the school, building on the government guidance. It has been agreed by senior management and approved by governors.

## **2. Social Media Definition**

### **2.1 What is social media?**

Social media technologies take on many different forms including magazines, Internet forums (message boards), weblogs (blogs), microblogging (Twitter, Reddit), social networks (Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, etc.), podcasts, photographs or pictures, video and virtual game worlds (Moshi Monsters, Club Penguin, etc.).

### **2.2. Websites and Blogs**

The following guidelines apply:

- 2.3 Staff, governors, parents and carers must not disclose any information that is confidential to the school or any third party that has disclosed information to the school.
- 2.4 Staff, governors, parents and carers should not link any personal websites, social networking sites etc. to the school's website.
- 2.5 Staff, governors, parents and carers must not use the school website, internet systems, e-mail addresses or access personal social media while at work.
- 2.6 If a member of staff, governor, parent or carer is asked to contribute to an official weblog connected to the school, then special rules will apply and they will be told in detail how to operate and what to write.
- 2.7 Barrowby CE Primary School will not tolerate criticisms through social media websites and blogs. If a member of staff feels aggrieved, then they must follow the procedures outlined in the Complaints and Whistleblowing Policy.

## **3 Social Networking Sites**

- 3.1 The school respects a member of staff's right to a private life. However, the school must also ensure that confidentiality and its reputation are protected.
- 3.2 The school expects all staff, governors, parents and carers to:
- Ensure that they do not conduct themselves in a way that is detrimental to the school.
  - Take care not to allow their interaction on these websites to damage working relationships between members of staff and clients of the school.

## **4. Appropriate use of social networking sites by parents**

- 4.1 Social networking sites have potential to enhance the learning and achievement of pupils and enable parents to access information about school more readily. The school uses Facebook as the preferred Social Media platform.

4.2 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.

4.3 All parents on joining the school family sign the Social Media Agreement:

#### **Social Media Agreement**

If I take photographs/videos at a school event which include children other than my own, I will NOT upload them onto social networking sites without consent from the person with Parental Responsibility for the child/ren in the picture/video.

I will NOT post comments about the school, staff, pupils or school events on social networking sites, which may cause offence to members of our school community or indirectly place our pupils at risk.

As a responsible parent I support school policies on digital technology and the internet. I monitor my child's use of the Internet and Social Media outside of school. I will also act as a positive role model and will use social media responsibly in respect of all matters relating to the school.

4.4 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:

- Does it contravene the Social Media signed at the child's Induction to Barrowby CE Primary School?
- 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.

#### **5. Inappropriate use of social networking sites by parents**

5.1 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.

- 5.2 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)
- 5.3 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;
  - Making defamatory statements about school or staff;
  - Posting negative/offensive comments about specific pupils/staff;
  - Posting racist comments;
  - Posting comments which threaten or incite violence.
- 5.4 Parents should also ensure that their children are not using social networking/internet sites in an inappropriate manner.
- 5.5 It is expected that parents/carers explain to their children what is acceptable to post online.
- 5.6 Parents/carers are also expected to monitor their children's online activity, including in relation to their use of social media. In addition, parents should be aware of the age restrictions used on social media sites.
6. **Procedure the school will follow if inappropriate Social Media use continues:**
- 6.1 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.
- 6.2 In the event that any pupil or parent/carer of a child/ren is found to be posting libellous or defamatory comments on Facebook or other social network sites, they will be reported to the appropriate 'report abuse' section of the network site. 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 Social Media Agreement and the possible repercussions of such action.
- 6.2 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 in writing, giving a warning and requesting that the material in question is removed;

- Contact the Police where the school feels it is appropriate – for example, if it considers a crime (such as harassment) has been committed; or in cases where the posting has a racial element, is considered to be grossly obscene or is threatening violence;

6.3 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.

## 7. **Code of Conduct for Social Networking**

7.1 The following are not considered acceptable at Barrowby CE Primary:

- The use of the school's name, logo, or any other published material without written prior permission from the Headteacher. This applies to any published material including the internet or written documentation;
- The posting of any communication or images which links the school to any form of illegal conduct or which may damage its reputation. This includes defamatory comments;
- The disclosure of confidential or business-sensitive information; or the disclosure of information or images that could compromise the security of the school;
- The posting of any images of employees, children or anyone directly connected with the school whilst engaged in school activities except by a designated person for agreed publicity use.

7.2 In addition to the above everyone at Barrowby CE Primary School must ensure that they:

- Do not make any derogatory, defamatory, rude, threatening or inappropriate comments about the school, or anyone at or connected with the school;
- Use social networking sites responsibly and ensure that neither their personal/professional reputation, or the school's reputation is compromised by inappropriate postings;
- Are aware of the potential of on-line identity fraud and to be cautious when giving out personal information about themselves which may compromise their personal safety and security;
- Communication between pupils and adults should take place within clear and explicit professional boundaries;
- Should not share any personal information with a child or young person;
- All communications are transparent and open to scrutiny;
- Personal contact details including email, home or mobile numbers should not be given unless the need to do so is agreed by the Headteacher;
- Ensure that personal social networking sites are set to Private and pupils are never listed as approved contacts;
- Never use or access social networking sites of pupils;

- Not give their personal contact details to pupils, including their mobile telephone number;
- Not use internal or web-based communication channels to send personal messages to a child/young person;
- It is strongly recommended that Facebook friend requests not be initiated to or accepted from parents.

## **8. Potential and Actual Breaches of the Code of Conduct**

8.1 In instances where there has been a breach of the above Code of Conduct, the following will apply:

- 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 under the Disciplinary Procedure.
- A breach of this policy will be considered to be a serious disciplinary offence which is also contrary to the school's ethos and principles.

## **9. Important Considerations**

When writing a weblog and placing information on social networking sites, staff, governors, parents and carers should follow these guidelines:

- Do not include any information that breaches copyright and should link to other material rather than cutting and pasting it
- Do not defame (libel) anyone. A member of staff, governor, parent or carer who makes a defamatory statement that is published on the internet may be legally liable for any damage to the reputation of the individual concerned
- Include personal information about an individual without his/her consent, otherwise they risk breaching the Data Protection Act 1998, which is a criminal offence.
- Include material that is abusive, defamatory, sexist, racist or that could be interpreted as harassment or bullying.
- Bring Barrowby CE Primary School into disrepute.
- Staff should only access social media sites in their own time.
- Staff should not comment on any posts made by others relating to the school.
- Staff should not share or discuss matters relating to the school
- It is not advisable to invite parents/carers to become your friends on social networking sites. There may be a conflict of interest and security and privacy issues, but where relationships are already established, staff should proceed with caution, being fully aware of the social media guidelines and the teacher's code of conduct.
- Staff should not accept friend requests from pupils under any circumstances.
- Staff should use the privacy settings available.
- Staff should not share personal conversations.
- Staff should behave respectfully and should not engage in topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory such as politics or religion.

## **10. Cyber Bullying**

Barrowby CE Primary School is committed to ensuring that all of its staff, parents/carers and pupils are treated with dignity and respect. Bullying and harassment of any kind will not be tolerated. Cyber-bullying methods could include text messages, emails, phone calls, instant messenger services, circulating photos or video clips or by posting comments on web sites, blogs or in chat rooms. Personal blogs that refer to colleagues without their consent is also unacceptable. Staff, governors, parents and carers who cyber-bully could also face criminal prosecution under various laws, including the Malicious Communications Act 1988.

#### **11. Security and Identity Theft**

Staff, governors, parents and carers should be aware that social networking websites are a public forum, particularly if they are part of a 'network'. Staff, governors, parents and carers should not assume that their entries on any website will remain private. Staff, governors, parents and carers must also be security conscious and should take steps to protect themselves from identity theft, for example by restricting the amount of personal information that they give out. Social networking websites allow people to post detailed personal information such as date of birth, place of birth and, for example, favourite football team which can form the basis of security questions and passwords.

#### **12. Social Media Policy Review**

This policy is reviewed by the Head teacher, staff and Governors in accordance with Barrowby School's Policy and Review Cycle for approval by the Full Governing Body, every 3 years.

Last reviewed: November 2022

Next review: November 2025

## **Appendix – What is a Social Networking Site?**

*“A social network service focuses on building online communities of people who share interests and/or activities, or who are interested in exploring the interests and activities of others. Most social network services are web-based and provide a variety of ways for users to interact, such as e-mail and instant messaging services.*

*Social networking has encouraged new ways to communicate and share information. Social networking websites are being used regularly by millions of people.’ (Source: Wikipedia).*

Any site that allows the interaction between people and/or organisations can be considered social networking, though most people think of Facebook and similar sites as typical examples of social networking.

### **What does a social networking site do?**

These sites provide a platform – typically outside of an organisation’s network – typically based on the World Wide Web where anybody can gain access and interact in some way with others. That interaction can be mainly written, as in Facebook and Twitter, it can be video as in YouTube or it can be multimedia, as in MSN. The main reason is often to keep in touch with larger groups of people already known to you, such as school or university friends.

Internal Social Media systems exist; the difference being ‘Internal’ means the content is not available to the outside world. It is a locked system.

### **What is a blog?**

A blog is a form of diary or mini web site – usually web hosted and available to the world, although corporate and closed systems using blogs also exist. Open blogs are universally available and searchable and are mainly constructed by individuals to talk about issues which interest them.

Many blogs are semi-professional: during the last American election the parties treated bloggers with almost as much importance as they did traditional journalists employed by radio, TV and newspapers - such is the impact of the blogosphere on the way news is accessed by the public.

They cover the whole spectrum of human activity and are the ultimate niche communication/marketing tool. Anybody can set one up using the likes of blogger.com or Wordpress.com. It takes just a few seconds.

### **Who are the major players?**

**Facebook:** <http://www.facebook.com>

Facebook has millions of people online, each of whom has added a personal profile completed to some degree. These profiles often contain personal information and care is needed when setting them up and allowing access to them. Many School employees have private Facebook accounts.



The concept of Facebook is one where you can tell the world what you are doing at any given moment. Groups or communities are easily started up to exchange information and have 'conversations' over a period of time. Since these groups can be set up by anyone and are largely unmediated, anybody can say almost anything about whatever they wish to discuss, and derogatory or inaccurate comment is impossible to remove.

**Twitter:** <http://www.twitter.com>

This is a form of micro blogging (see '*What is a blog*' above). It started out as a tool used by the employees of a company to keep each other informed of what they were doing, seeing or thinking about, moment by moment. The activity grew such that there are now millions of people 'tweeting' and following the 'tweets' of celebrities and organisations from actor Stephen Fry, who has half a million followers, to 10 Downing Street, which has slightly more at 700,000.

The big difference between Twitter and blogs is that you can only use 140 characters for each tweet. You tweet about anything, at any time. Any fellow twitterer can decide to read your tweets and become a follower, which means that your Tweets automatically appear on their Twitter page or mobile phone. They can also reply to you directly if they choose to.

Local authorities across the UK are using this to push out news updates and information. You can see these on [www.twitter.com/uklocalcouncils](http://www.twitter.com/uklocalcouncils)

**Yammer:** [www.yammer.com](http://www.yammer.com)

Is a similar product which is designed entirely for use by organisations setting up closed groups?

**YouTube:** <http://www.youtube.com>

Is an internet accessible platform where videos can be posted so that anyone can see them? Links to video stories can be posted from anywhere within your web site making this a particularly powerful tool.

**FLICKR:** <http://www.flickr.com/>

Flickr is an internet available web site which can make pictures available to anyone, anywhere, anytime. Members upload photos and choose privacy levels to restrict access. So while this is a public site, not all the pictures need be. You can choose who can see your images and invite people to look at them. The user has the ability to control access to pictures at will. The service is largely free for the average user.

### **Instagram**

Instagram is a photo and video sharing social networking service owned by American company Meta Platforms. The app allows users to upload media that can be edited with filters and organized by hashtags and geographical tagging. Posts can be shared publicly or with preapproved followers.

## **TikTok**

TikTok encourages users to craft short videos of up to three minutes. Users can create and upload videos that range anywhere from comedic skits to compelling think pieces and dances, most often set to music. Since these groups can be set up by anyone and are largely unmediated, anybody can say almost anything about whatever they wish to discuss, and derogatory or inaccurate comment is impossible to remove.

**These well-known players are not the only companies who perform this type of activity. There are many others available, but this gives a flavour of the current popularity and use of the medium.**

**This list is not exhaustive. It is produced simply to give an indication of the variety of Social media (networking) functionality. Also such is the nature of this media any figures are out of date as soon as they are written.**