

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Using Social Media at Biddenham School

The widespread availability and use of social media applications bring opportunities to understand, engage, and communicate in new and exciting ways. It is important that we are able to use these technologies and services effectively and flexibly. However, it is also important to ensure that we balance this with our duties to our school, the community, our legal responsibilities and our reputation.

For example, our use of social networking applications has implications for our duty to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults. The policy requirements in this document aim to provide this balance to support innovation whilst providing a framework of good practice. They apply to all members of staff at the school.

The purpose of the policy is to:

- Protect the school from legal risks.
- Ensure that the reputation of the school, its staff and governors is protected.
- Safeguard all children and staff.
- Ensure that any users are able clearly to distinguish where information provided via social media is legitimately representative of the school.

This document is divided into two parts. The first deals with using social media services as part of teaching or school business; the second looks at how staff should manage their personal social media accounts.

Definitions and Scope

Biddenham School encourages the responsible, professional use of the Internet and social media to support educational delivery and professional development.

Social networking applications include, but are not limited to: blogs, online discussion forums, collaborative spaces, media sharing services, 'microblogging' applications, media streaming, and online gaming environments. Examples include Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Google Meet/Hangouts, Windows Live Messenger, Periscope, YouTube, Flickr, Xbox Live, Blogger, Tumblr, snapchat, tiktok, and comment streams on public websites such as newspaper sites.

All members of staff should bear in mind that information they share through social networking applications, even if they are on private spaces, are still subject to copyright, Malicious Communication Act, data protection and Freedom of Information legislation, Safeguarding and other legislation. They must also operate in line with the school's Equalities, Child Protection and ICT Acceptable Use Policies. Within this policy there is a distinction between use of school sanctioned social media for professional educational purposes, and personal use of social media.

Remember:

- Nothing is private.
- Nothing can be deleted.
- Everything you share reflects on yourself and the school.

School sanctioned use of social media

There are many legitimate uses of social media within the curriculum and to support student learning. There are also many possibilities for using social media to enhance and develop students' learning. When using social media for educational purposes, the following practices must be observed:

- School social media accounts should be entirely separate from any personal social media accounts held by members of staff, and should be linked to an official school email account (with the exception of the schools Facebook & Linked in).
- Staff may create their own departmental social media account within the guidelines outlined below & approval from the Network Manager or Principal.
- No member of staff should use social media while in class with students (with the exception of school sanctioned accounts, e.g. departmental twitter/Instagram).
- The URL and identity of the site should be notified to the appropriate line manager and the Network Manager before access is permitted for students.
- The content of any school sanctioned social media site should be solely professional and should reflect well on the school.
- Staff must not publish photographs of children without the written consent of parents/carers, identify by name any children featured in photographs, or allow personally identifying information to be published on school social media accounts.
- All communication between School employees\volunteers from/to members of the school community on school business must be made from official school social media accounts and where possible moved to email.
- Care must be taken that any links to external sites from the account are appropriate and safe. Be warned some hate groups occasionally share wholesome material to gain validity.
- Any inappropriate comments on or abuse of school-sanctioned social media should immediately be removed and reported to a member of SLT.
- Staff should not engage with any direct messaging of students through social media where the message is not public.
- Social media accounts should not be stored on any device - smartphone, tablet, or computer - where there is a chance it could be accessed by persons not employed by the school.
- Please ensure that personal and social networking sites are set such that students are never listed as approved contacts.

Personal use of Social Media

These guidelines should influence your use of personal social media accounts while you are an employee of Biddenham International School & Sports College.

- When using social media and internet sites the School draws no distinction between professional conduct online and offline.
- When using social networking sites and the internet employees\volunteers should ensure that this does not damage the reputation of the School (or themselves) whether this is carried out during the school time or privately. Staff are personally responsible for the content they publish on social media sites and the internet and must be mindful that this information will be in the public domain.
- Employees\volunteers must have regard to the fact that they will be responsible for any commentary which is deemed to be a breach of copyright, a breach of confidence, defamatory, libellous or obscene.
- As such be careful that media posts you share come from a reputable source and are not associated with known hate groups or extremism.
- Staff are also advised to consider the reputation of the school in any posts or comments related to the school on any social media accounts. Where appropriate, it should be clear that any views shared are the employees as an individual and not necessarily the views of the School.

- Staff are advised to avoid interacting with posts or comments that refer to specific, individual matters related to the school and members of its community on any social media accounts.
- Any employees\volunteers contacted by the published media or radio or television about a post they have made on a social networking site should inform the Principal immediately.
- School employees\volunteers will not invite, accept or engage in communications with current Children\Young adults or parents from the school community on any personal social media platform.
- If a School employees\volunteers already has a pre-existing relationship with a member of the school community, they should refrain from posting about BISSC or restrict the person's access.
- School employees\volunteers are strongly advised to set all privacy settings to the highest possible levels on all personal social media accounts. It is also advised to check these settings from another account.
- School employees\volunteers should not use personal email accounts or personal social media accounts (Messenger/Whatsapp/Instagram/TikTok etc) to make contact with members of the school community on school business, nor should any such contact be accepted except in exceptional circumstances where the Principal/Head of School or Designated Safeguarding Lead has given prior authorisation.
- School employees\volunteers should not use personal email accounts or social media accounts (Messenger/Whatsapp/Instagram/TikTok etc) for discussing school Business/Employee data/Pupil & Parent data/Safeguarding/Picture sharing so that all data processing and information sharing is kept in a secure & controlled environment. Suitable internal tools are Google Chat & Gmail to meet the need for instant messaging & communication. This doesn't apply to interpersonal communication between peers/colleagues for non business related subjects IE Would you like to meet for lunch, How was your day etc
- If any School employees\volunteers are made aware of any inappropriate communications involving anyone from the school community on social media these incidents must be reported immediately to the Principal/Head of School or the Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- Any communication received from a member of the school community on any personal social media sites must be reported to the Principal/Head of School or the Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- Staff should not accept any current student of any age or any ex-student of the school under the age of 18 as a friend, follower, subscriber, or similar on any personal social media account.

Inappropriate use of Social Network Site

Social media websites are being used increasingly to fuel campaigns and complaints against schools, Principals, school staff and in some cases, other parents/students. Employees\volunteers and governors of Biddenham School should consider the use of social media websites being used in this way unacceptable and not in the best interests of the children and the whole school community. Any concerns you may have must be made/reported to the appropriate channels by speaking to the Principal or the Chair of Governors, so they can be dealt with fairly, appropriately and effectively for all concerned.

In the event that any employees\volunteers at Biddenham School are found to be posting libellous or defamatory comments on any social media 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 and they provide robust mechanisms to report contact or activity which breaches this.

The school will also expect that any parent/carer or student removes such comments immediately. In serious cases the school will also consider its legal options to deal with any such misuse of social networking and other sites. Additionally, and perhaps more importantly is the issue of cyberbullying

and the use by one child or parent to threaten, offend or humiliate another by inappropriate social network entry. We will take and deal with this as a serious incident of school bullying. Thankfully such incidents are extremely rare.

Date of Next Review: **February 2025**