

Perryfields Primary School Policy on Parental use of Social Networking and Internet Sites

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. However, such sites can be inappropriately used by some as a means of expressing negative or offensive views about schools and their staff. This document sets out our 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 Perryfields Primary School.

Objectives

- 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 negative effects of social networking sites;
- Safeguard the reputation of the Perryfields Primary School from abuse on social networking sites;
- Clarify what Perryfields Primary School considers to be appropriate and inappropriate use of social networking sites by parents;
- Set out the procedures that Perryfields Primary 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 Perryfields Primary School; and
- Set out the action that Perryfields Primary School will consider taking if parents make inappropriate use of social networking sites.

Appropriate use of social networking sites by parents

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 the Perryfields Primary School, its staff, its pupils, or anyone else associated with the school:

- Is the social networking site the appropriate channel to raise such concerns and/or to express these views?
- Would private and confidential discussions with relevant staff at Perryfields Primary 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 individual pupils or staff, or to 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 appropriate staff from Perryfields Primary School has not yet had a chance to investigate a complaint?
- Will the posting make a detrimental impact on the reputation of the school and cause any type of harm?

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 Perryfields Primary School (and those associated with it), it is rarely appropriate to do so. Other channels, such as a private and confidential discussion with the school, or using the Perryfields Primary School's formal complaints process are much better suited to this.

Perryfields Primary 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/comments about staff, governors or pupils at Perryfields Primary School /cyber-bullying;
- Making defamatory statements about staff, pupils, other parents or governors at Perryfields Primary School;
- Posting negative/offensive comments about specific pupils/staff/governors at staff, pupils, other parents or governors at Perryfields Primary School;
- Posting comments which threaten violence or encourage violence;
- Making discriminatory comments that breach the terms and conditions of the social networking sites.

Please note that although consent is sought from parents concerning the use of photographs in the public domain, this is not always given. Therefore, posting other pupils' photographs on Social Networking Sites could compromise the safety and well-being of some pupils.

It is considered to be good practice for parents/carers to monitor their children's online activity, including their access to social media sites. Primary aged pupils should not have access to certain Social Networking Sites, including Face Book. 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. (Please see the school's On-Line Safety Policy for more advice and detail).

Procedure the School will follow if inappropriate use continues

- Perryfields Primary School will always try to deal with concerns raised by parents in a professional and appropriate manner and understands that parents may not always realise when they have used social networking sites inappropriately. Therefore, as a first step, the school will usually discuss the matter with the parent to try and resolve the matter and to ask that the relevant information be removed from the social networking site in question. If the parent refuses to do this and continues to use social networking sites in a manner that staff, pupils, other parents or governors at Perryfields Primary School considers inappropriate, the school will consider taking the following action:
- Set out the school's concerns to you in writing and request that the material in question is removed;
- 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 legal advice and/or legal action where the information posted is defamatory in any way or if the circumstances warrant this;
- Take other legal action against the individual.
- 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 racial element, is considered to be grossly obscene or is threatening violence;
- If inappropriate e-mails are received through the school website e-mail functions the school may take action to block future e-mails from the sender.

I have read and understood and agree to comply with the Perryfields Primary School's Policy on Parental Use of Social Networking/Internet Sites.

This policy will be shared and signed by parents at the start of every academic year.

Signed on behalf of the pupil's family: Date:

Pupil's Names: Relationship to child: