Much Birch C of E Primary School

Social Media Policy



'We will flourish and reach our God given potential'

I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit. **John 15:5**

All members of our whole school community are able to realise their God-given potential, enabling them to become equal, caring and active citizens whilst upholding true Christian values. We treat others, as we would like to be treated, with dignity and respect. Everyone is encouraged to flourish with hope and high aspirations

Updated **2 yearly**

Review date Sept 2028

Head teacher Ms B Davies

Chair of Governors Rev. Mark Johnson

Overview

Social media (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, X, Whatsapp) is a broad term for any kind of online platform which enables people to directly interact with each other.

Much Birch Primary School recognises the numerous benefits and opportunities which a social media presence offers. Staff, governors, parents, carers, pupils and external visitors are encouraged to find creative ways to use social media. However, there are some risks associated with social media use, especially around the issues of safeguarding, bullying and personal reputation.

Purpose

This policy aims to encourage the safe, responsible and respectful use of social media by Much Birch Primary School and all stakeholders. We aim to encourage the use of social media to support the school's vision and values by establishing a set of rules and regulations that enables all to use social media for the benefit of all stakeholders. Additionally, this document aims to safeguard the school and its employees.

Professional Communications

Professional communications are those made through official channels, posted on a school account or using the school name. All professional communications are within the scope of this policy.

Personal Communications

Personal communications are those made via a personal social media account. In all cases, no personal account should be used, only the official Much Birch account from which all posts will come from.

The school respects privacy and understands that staff, governors, parents, carers, pupils and external visitors may use social media forums in their private lives. However, personal communications likely to have a negative impact on professional standards and/or the school's reputation are within the scope of this policy.

Parent/Child - Roles & Responsibilities

Most social media platforms have age limits – we would not expect primary school age children to have access to social media:

Platform	Minimum age in the UK	Useful school and parent note
Facebook	13	Users must be at least 13 to create an account.
Instagram	13	Teen accounts have additional privacy and safety protections.
WhatsApp	13	Current UK terms state that users must be at least 13.
Snapchat	13	The minimum age for a standard Snapchat account is 13.
TikTok	13	Some features have higher age limits, including certain messaging and live features.
X formerly Twitter	13	Users under 18 have additional protections and settings.
YouTube	13 for an independently managed account	Children under 13 can use YouTube Kids or a parent supervised YouTube account.
Discord	13	Users must meet Discord's minimum age requirement for their country.

School - Roles & Responsibilities

SLT

• Facilitating training and guidance on Social Media use

• Developing and implementing the Social Media policy

• Taking a lead role in investigating any reported incidents

• Making an initial assessment when an incident is reported and involving appropriate staff and external agencies as required

• Approve account creation

Administrator/s

• Monitor the accounts in accordance with SLT approval

• Store account details, including passwords securely

• Be involved in contributing to the account

• Control the process for managing an account after the lead staff member has left the organisation (closing or transferring)

• Receive completed applications for Social Media accounts and transfer to SLT for consideration

Staff

• Know the contents of and ensure that any use of social media is carried out in line with this and other relevant policies

• Attend appropriate training

• Regularly monitor, update and manage content posted via school accounts, including school website (class pages)

• Add an appropriate disclaimer to personal accounts when naming the school

• Seek confirmation from a member of SLT / communications team in relation to content posted to social media platforms

Protection of Staff Acting in Good Faith

It is fully recognised that a member of staff may accidentally breach this policy whilst acting in good faith and in the course of their duties as a member of staff of the school. If a member of staff suspects this to be the case, they must notify the Head Teacher or a member of the SLT immediately so that action can be taken to prevent or minimise damage.

Behaviour

The school requires that all users using social media adhere to the standard of behaviour as set out in this policy and other relevant policies. Digital communications by staff must be professional and respectful at all times and in accordance with this policy. Staff will not use social media to infringe on the rights and privacy of others or make ill-considered comments or judgments about staff. School social media accounts must not be used for personal gain. Staff must ensure that confidentiality is maintained on social media even after they leave the employment of the school.

If a member of public makes contact about posts made using social media - staff must liaise with a member of SLT and follow the school media policy before responding. Unacceptable conduct, (e.g. defamatory, discriminatory, offensive, harassing content or a breach of data protection, confidentiality, copyright) will be considered extremely seriously by the school and should be reported as soon as possible to a relevant senior member of staff, and escalated where appropriate.

The school will take appropriate action in the event of breaches of the social media policy. Where conduct is found to be unacceptable, the school will deal with the matter internally. Where conduct is considered illegal, the school will report the matter to the police and other relevant external agencies, and, may take action according to the disciplinary policy.

Monitoring

School accounts will be monitored regularly and frequently (including during holidays). As part of active social media engagement, it is considered good practice to pro-actively monitor the Internet for public postings about the school. The school should effectively respond to social media comments made by others according to a defined policy or process.

Legal Considerations

Users of social media should consider the copyright of the content they are sharing and, where necessary, should seek permission from the copyright holder before sharing. Users must ensure that their use of social media does not infringe upon relevant data protection laws, or breach confidentiality.

Handling Abuse

When acting on behalf of the school, offensive comments should be handled swiftly and with sensitivity. If a conversation turns and becomes offensive or unacceptable, school users should block, report or delete other users or their comments/posts and should inform the audience exactly why the action was taken. If you feel that you or someone else is subject to abuse through use of a social networking site, then this action must be reported using the agreed school protocols.

Use of Images

School use of images can be assumed to be acceptable, providing the following guidelines are strictly adhered to. Permission to use any photos or video recordings should be sought. If anyone, for any reason, asks not to be filmed or photographed then their wishes should be respected. Under no circumstances should staff share or upload student pictures online other than via school owned social media accounts. Staff should exercise their professional judgement about whether an image is appropriate to share on school social media accounts. Students should be appropriately dressed, not be subject to ridicule and must not be on any school list of children whose images must not be published.

Acceptable Use of Social Media for ALL Stakeholders

• Staff are not permitted to follow or engage with current pupils/students of the school on any personal social media network account

• If parents/carers have access to a school learning platform or social media platform where posting or commenting is enabled, parents/carers will be informed about acceptable use

• Parents, carers and external visitors should not post pictures of pupils other than their own children

• Parents, carers, governors and external visitors are encouraged to comment or post appropriately about the school; in the event of any offensive or inappropriate comments being made, the school will ask the individual involved to remove the post and invite them to discuss the issues in person. If necessary, individuals should be referred to the school's complaints procedures

• If damaging or negative comments about the school or staff are posted on social media platforms, it should be reported to the school as soon as possible; any offensive or inappropriate comments will be resolved by the use of the school's behaviour policy and as previously defined within this policy

While this policy cannot cover independent supporters of the school, i.e. parents, they are encouraged to follow its principles and will be regularly reminded of their responsibilities regarding their use of social networking.

Managing School Social Media Accounts

The Do’s

• Administrators must use the Much Birch Facebook /Instagram profile handle to post online, not personal accounts

• Not express personal views

• Use an appropriate and professional tone

• Be respectful to all parties

• Ensure you have permission to ‘share’ other people’s materials and acknowledge the author

• Express opinions but do so in a balanced and measured manner

• As a rule, turn off commenting on Facebook posts.

• Seek advice and report any mistakes to a member of the SLT

The Don’ts

• Don’t make comments, post content or link to materials that will bring the school into disrepute

• Don’t publish confidential or commercially sensitive material

• Don’t publish children’s names alongside photographs online

• Don’t breach copyright, data protection or other relevant legislation

• Consider the appropriateness of content for any audience of school accounts, and don’t link to, embed or add potentially inappropriate content

• Don’t post derogatory, defamatory, offensive, harassing or discriminatory content

• Don’t use social media to air internal grievances