Social Media Policy for Pupils, Parents & Visitors

St. Matthew's Catholic Primary School Social Media Presence

St. Matthew's Catholic Primary School works on the principle that if we don't manage our social media then someone else will. The school follows the advice given by LGfL and the UK Safer Internet Centre on Online Reputation Management: understanding and managing our digital footprint (everything that can be seen or read about the school online). Few parents apply for a school place without first 'googling' the school, and the Ofsted pre-inspection check includes monitoring what is being said online (Mumsnet is a favourite).

Negative coverage almost always causes some level of disruption. Up to half of all cases dealt with by the Professionals Online Safety Helpline (POSH: helpline@saferinternet.org.uk) Involve schools' (and staff members') online reputation.

Accordingly, we manage and monitor our social media footprint carefully to know what is being said about the school and to respond to criticism and praise in a fair, responsible manner.

Our Senior Leadership Team, class teachers and administration staff are responsible for managing our Twitter account.

Pupils', Parents and Visitors Social Media Presence

Social media (including here all apps, sites and games that allow sharing and interaction between users) is a fact of modern life, and as a school, we accept that many pupils, parents and visitors will use it. However, as stated in our Acceptable Use Policy, we expect everybody to behave in a positive manner, engaging respectfully with the school and each other on social media, in the same way as they would face to face.

This positive behaviour can be summarised as not making any posts which are or could be construed as bullying, aggressive, rude, insulting, illegal or otherwise inappropriate, or which might bring the school or the teaching profession into disrepute. This applies both to public pages and to private posts e.g. parent chats, pages or groups.

If parents have a concern about the school, we would urge them to contact us directly and in private to resolve the matter. If an issue cannot be resolved in this way, the school complaints procedure https://www.stmatthewsprimaryschool.co.uk/website/policies should be followed. Sharing complaints on social media is unlikely to help resolve the matter, but can cause upset to staff, pupils and parents, also undermining staff morale and the reputation of the school (which is important for the pupils we serve).

Many social media platforms have a minimum age of 13, but the school regularly deals with issues arising on social media with pupils under the age of 13. We ask parents to respect age ratings on social media platforms wherever possible and not encourage or condone underage use. It is worth noting that following on from the government's Safer Internet Strategy, enforcement and age checking is likely to become more stringent over the coming years.

However, the school has to strike a difficult balance of not encouraging underage use at the same time as needing to acknowledge reality in order to best help our pupils to avoid or cope with issues if they arise. Online safety lessons will look at social media and other online behaviour, how to be a good friend online and how to report bullying, misuse, intimation or abuse. However, children will often learn most form the models of behaviour they see and experience, which will often be from adults.

Parents can best support this by talking to their children about the apps, sites and games they use (you don't need to know them – ask your child to explain it to you), with whom, for how long and when (late at night/in bedrooms is not helpful for a good nights' sleep and productive teaching and learning at school the next day). It is encouraging that 73% of pupils (from the 40, 000 who answered that LGfL DigiSafe pupil online safety survey) trust their parents on online safety (although only half talk about it with them more than once a year at the moment).

The school's official Twitter account will communicate general updates about school life and parents do not have access to make their own posts on it.

Email is the official electronic communication channel between parents and school.

Pupils are not allowed to be 'friends' with or make a friend request to any staff, governors, volunteers and contractors or otherwise communicate via social media. Any attempt to do so may be a safeguarding concern or disciplinary matter and should be notified to the Head Teacher.

All members of the school community are reminded that particularly in the context of social media, it is important to comply with the school's E-Safety Policy and that permission is sought before uploading photographs, videos or any other information about other people. Where this takes place without clear consent, it can be dangerous and in breach of data protection legislation, leading to large fines.

The statements of the Acceptable Use Policy which all members of the school community have signed are also relevant to social media activity, as it the school's Data Protection Policy https://www.stmatthewsprimaryschool.co.uk/website/general_data_protection_regulation

Social Media Incidents

Breaches of this policy and of school's E-Safety and Acceptable Use Polies will be dealt with in line with the school Behaviour Policy (for pupils) and the Code of Conduct for Parents & Visitors https://www.stmatthewsprimaryschool.co.uk/website/policies

Further to this, where an incident relates to an inappropriate, upsetting, violent or abusive social media post by a member of the school community, St. Matthew's will request that the post be deleted and will expect this to be actioned promptly.

Where an offending post has been made by a third party, the school may report it to the platform where it is hosted, and may contact the Professionals' Online Safety Helpline (run by the UK Safer Internet Centre) for support to help to accelerate this process. The police or other authorities may be involved where a post is potentially illegal or dangerous.

Extremism

The school has obligations relating to radicalisation and all forms of extremism under the Prevent Duty https://www.stmatthewsprimaryschool.co.uk/website/safeguarding_and_e-safety Staff will not support or promote extremist organisations, messages or individuals, give them a voice or opportunity to visit the school, nor browse, download or send material that is considered offensive or of an extreme nature by the school. We ask for parents' support in this also, especially relating to social media, where extremism and hate speech can be widespread on certain platforms.

Further Questions

If parents have further questions, they can contact Mrs Sime (Head Teacher) at the school. The NSPCC also has a parent online safety helpline, which can deal with general issues that are not school specific.