Social Media Policy for Pupils, Parents & Visitors

Written: February 2020

Date of Review: November2024

Leader: Mrs C Sime

This policy sets out St Matthew's Catholic Primary School's policy on social networking. Social networking activities conducted online outside work, such as blogging, involvement in any social networking sites such as Facebook or Twitter and posting material, images or comments on sites such as You Tube can have a negative effect on an organisation's reputation or image.

In addition, St Matthew's Catholic Primary School has a firm commitment to safeguarding children in all aspects of its work. This policy has been written to set out the key principles and code of conduct that we expect of all members of staff with respect to their responsibilities in connection with the use of social networking sites.

Key Principles

- Everyone at St Matthew's Catholic Primary School (including parents) has a responsibility to ensure that they protect the reputation of the school, and to treat colleagues and members of the school with professionalism and respect.
- It is important to protect everyone at St Matthew's Catholic Primary School from allegations and misinterpretations which can arise from the use of social networking sites.
- 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.
- It is also completely unacceptable to communicate on social media about the school or any member of the school community in or out of work on personally owned equipment.

Aims

- To set out the key principles and code of conduct expected of all members of pupils, parents/ carers and visitor at St Matthew's Catholic Primary School with respect to social networking.
- To further safeguard and protect children and staff.

Overview and Expectations

All parents, carers and visitors have a responsibility to maintain public confidence in St. Matthew's ability to safeguard the welfare and best interests of children. It is therefore expected that they will adopt high standards of personal conduct in order to maintain the confidence and respect of the public in general and all those with whom they work. Parents/ carers and visitors should therefore understand and be aware that safe practice also involves using judgement and integrity.

Social media (including 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 behaves 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.

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 Digi Safe 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).

Code of Conduct: Social Networking
- Under no circumstances should parents make reference to any staff member, pupil, parent or school activity/event.

The following are also not considered acceptable at St. Matthew's Catholic Primary School:
- The use of the school's name, logo, or any other published material without written prior permission from the Headteacher or school governors. 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 the reputation of the school. 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, governors or anyone directly connected with the school whilst engaged in school activities.

In addition to the above everyone at St Matthew's Catholic Primary School must ensure that they:

- Communicate with children and parents in an open and transparent way using the school phone number and email address.
- Never 'friend' a pupil at the school where they are working onto their social networking site. 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 nor professional reputation, nor the school's reputation is compromised by inappropriate postings.
- 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.

Potential and Actual Breaches of the Code of Conduct
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.
- The Governing Body will take appropriate action in order to protect the school's reputation and that of its staff, parents, governors, children and anyone else directly linked to the school.
- Advice will be sought from the Local Authority, Legal services and the police to ensure that matters are dealt with
- 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

If parents have a concern about the school, we would urge them to contact school 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)

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.

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.