



**Social Networking Policy for Staff,
Governors, Friends and
Volunteers**

REVIEW DATE – SUMMER 2026

Introduction

Social networking activities conducted online outside work, such as blogging (writing personal journals to publicly accessible internet pages), involvement in social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram and 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, Newtownards Model 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

Staff at Newtownards Model Primary School have a responsibility to ensure that they protect the reputation of the school, and to treat colleagues and members of the school community with professionalism and respect.

It is important to protect everyone at Newtownards Model Primary School from allegations and misinterpretations which can arise from the use of social networking sites.

Safeguarding children is a key responsibility of all members of staff and it is essential that all staff at Newtownards Model Primary School consider this and act responsibly if they are using social networking sites outside school. Anyone working in the school either as a paid employee or volunteer must not communicate with children via social networking.

This policy relates to social networking outside work. Blogging and accessing social networking sites at work using school equipment or personal equipment is not permitted (unless it is for purposes related to the promotion/ celebration of the school and its stakeholders)

Aims

To set out the key principles and code of conduct expected of all members of staff, Governors, Friends and Volunteers at Newtownards Model Primary School with respect to social networking.

To further safeguard and protect children and staff.

Code of Conduct for Staff at Newtownards Model Primary School– Social Networking

The following are **not considered acceptable** at Newtownards Model Primary School:

- The use of the school's name, logo, or any other published material without written prior permission from the principal. 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. (unless noted for school promotion purposes)

In addition to the above, staff at Newtownards Model Primary School must ensure that they:

- 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/professional reputation, nor the school's reputation is compromised by inappropriate postings.
- Never 'friend' a pupil onto their social networking site or make comments about a child in school, as these could be misinterpreted.
- Ensure that any social networking accounts used have suitable privacy settings.
- Are aware of the potential of on-line identity fraud and to be cautious when giving out personal information about themselves which may compromise their personal safety and security.

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 under the Disciplinary Procedure. A breach of this policy will be considered to be a serious disciplinary offence which is also contrary to the school's ethos and principles.

The Board of Governors 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.

Cyber Harassment of Staff

Newtownards Model Primary School defines Cyber Harassment as, 'the use of communication technologies to embarrass, humiliate, threaten, defame or intimidate an individual.'

All employees are reminded of the need to protect themselves from the potential threat of Cyber Harassment. Employees are reminded of the potential risk from placing personal information on social networking sites.

If Cyber Harassment does occur, employees should not delete the content but keep records. Employees are advised to take screen prints of messages or web pages and be careful to record the time, date and place of the harassing material.

Staff are encouraged to report issues of Cyber Harassment to the principal. All such incidents will be taken seriously and will be dealt with in consideration of the wishes of the person who has reported the incident. Persons responsible, and or parents of pupils responsible, will be contacted by the principal who will request that the post be removed immediately.

It is for the individual who is being bullied to decide whether they wish to report the actions to the police or pursue a civil action against those who conducted the bullying behaviours.

Cyber Harassment of Pupils

Pupils are not permitted to have mobile phones or digital communication devices in school, unless permitted, in extreme circumstances by the principal. This ensures that Cyber Harassment cannot occur during school hours.

If a pupil of Newtownards Model Primary School is the subject of Cyber Harassment by another pupil or an adult, outside school hours, these incidents need to be dealt with by the parents of the harassed child through various outside agencies. Newtownards Model Primary School has an obligation to educate children about the dangers of using the internet, acceptable use of the internet and how to keep safe when using the internet through the delivery of a preventative curriculum. However, the school cannot be responsible for the social media interactions of individuals outside school hours on their own personal or family devices.

Access to Inappropriate Images and Internet Usage

There are no circumstances that will justify adults possessing indecent images of children. Staff who access and possess links to such websites will be viewed as a significant and potential threat to children. Accessing, making and storing indecent images of children are illegal. This will lead to criminal investigation and the individual being barred from working with children, if proven. Staff should not use equipment belonging to their school/service to access any pornography; neither should personal equipment containing these images or links to them be brought into the workplace. This will raise serious concerns about the suitability of the adult to continue to work with children.

Where indecent images of children are found by staff, the police should be immediately informed. Schools should not attempt to investigate the matter or evaluate the material themselves, as this may lead to evidence being contaminated which in itself can lead to a criminal prosecution. Where other unsuitable material is found, which may not be illegal but which raises concerns about that member of staff, the principal (and in the principal's absence, a member of the SLT) should be informed and that person will seek advice from EA Legal and HR departments. The school will not attempt to investigate or evaluate the material themselves until such advice is received.

Links with Other Policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following school policies:

Code of Conduct Policy

Behaviour for Learning Policy

ICT Policy

Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy

PDMU Policy

Anti-Bullying Policy