

Brownlee Primary School



Use of Social Media Policy 2020

This policy was adopted by the Board of Governors in November 2020

It will be reviewed by the Board of Governors in September 2022 or at such times as new guidance becomes available or relevant legislation is passed.

Mission Statement:

“Brownlee Primary is a school where the individual is valued in a supportive and safe environment where everyone’s learning experience is celebrated.”

As a school we wish to uphold a positive image with all stakeholders; pupils, staff, parents, governors and community members. *(For the purposes of this policy, the aforementioned individuals will be referred to collectively as ‘school community members’)*

As our Mission Statement says, we strive at all times to create an environment where there is mutual respect, where each person is valued as an individual and pastoral care is an integral part of the education we provide. Each pupil will be encouraged to fulfil his or her moral, intellectual, spiritual, physical, social, aesthetic and emotional potential. Use of ICT allows all pupils to gain confidence and ability in an ever-changing society and prepares them for the challenge of a rapidly evolving technological world.

As a school we aim;

- *To provide opportunities to enable all our staff, pupils and parents to be confident, competent and independent users of ICT.*
- *To provide an environment where access to ICT resources is commonplace and its benefits can be fully utilised.*
- *To ensure ICT has a fundamental role in developing and enhancing our school’s key learning aims in promoting the pupils’ educational, physical and social needs.*
- *ICT encourages our staff and pupils to work collaboratively.*

Brownlee Primary School recognises that many staff, governors, parents, carers and pupils use the internet for personal purposes and that they may participate in social networking on social media websites such as Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, etc.

In addition, staff, governors, parents and carers may set up personal weblogs or “blogs” on the internet. Whilst staff, governors, parents and carers are free to use the internet in this way, they must ensure that they do not breach the law or disclose Brownlee Primary School’s confidential information, breach copyright, defame the school, its policies, staff, governors, parents, carers and pupils. They must not disclose personal data or information about any individual that could breach the Data Protection Act 1998 or Brownlee Primary School’s Online Safety policy. They should keep completely confidential, any information regarding the children, their families or other staff which is learned through the school.

The purpose of this policy is to outline the responsibilities of staff, governors, parents and carers setting up personal websites and blogs and using social networking websites. This policy relates to material posted on public areas and those restricted to certain individuals.

Social Media and Networking Definition

Social media technologies take on many different forms including magazines, Internet forums (message-boards), weblogs (blogs), micro-blogging (Twitter, Reddit), social networks (Facebook, Myspace, Instagram etc), podcasts, photographs or pictures, video and virtual game worlds (Moshi Monsters, Club Penguin, etc).

With social networks people across the world have access to tools and options that were previously non-existent. Friends can keep in touch and instant communication can take place with people in the next street or on the other side of the world.

With all the advancements and benefits that social networking offers, there is also a real potential for exploitation and danger for people of all ages. One thing we often forget while having fun on social networks is that almost anybody can see what we are doing. While we are tagging photos of our friends or posting comments to them, it can be easy to forget that someone else, who has been invited onto a social networking site, can also view them. Often there is a minimal amount of control over who ultimately gets to see our post. Once something appears on the Internet, it's almost impossible to remove. As these sites continue to grow in popularity, so too does the value of the information on them to parties other than those directly involved.

Social networking users need to take a step back and think about just what they are posting onto the Internet as it can have serious ramifications. This policy serves to convey the guidelines which members of our school community in Brownlee Primary should operate within.

We recognise that as a school we hold no jurisdiction in policing social media platforms, but we urge the whole school community to work collaboratively to communicate appropriately and remember at all times that they are representatives of the school and their actions on social media can potentially have a negative impact on the life and welfare of those connected with the school.

As educators, we believe that the partnership of parent and school is intrinsic to realising the best educational outcomes for our pupils. This policy outlines the context of social media and the responsibilities that staff and parents have in role-modelling effective and safe communication on social media.

Responsibilities of Staff

Staff should not access social media websites during school hours unless for a school related purpose and permission has been sought by the Principal or a member of senior management. People who work with children and young people should always maintain appropriate professional boundaries, avoid improper contact or relationships and respect their position of trust. No member of staff should have an online 'friendship' or social media communication with either a current pupil or a past pupil until they have reached the age of 18.

With regard to the wider context of online relationships, individuals who work with children and young people should not attempt to establish a relationship, which might include:

- communication of a personal or intimate nature,
- inappropriate or abusive dialogue through the internet or social media posts,
- sharing of personal details to those who are not known personally to the user, including email address, home address and phone numbers,
- the sending of emails or text messages of an inappropriate nature.

Individuals, who work with children and young people, should be extremely careful in corresponding with people on social networking sites.

There are occasions when a teacher may need to communicate with pupils via email/ Google Classroom or Class Dojo as part of homework or a project. On such occasions, online staff relationships with children and young people should, at all times, remain professional and task focused. As mentioned earlier in this policy, staff should not correspond with children and young people through social media sites or add them as 'friends'. It is worth bearing in mind that, on such sites, an inappropriate or even misconstrued communication may have the potential to impact upon a member of staff's career, or even result in criminal investigation. In addition, staff should bear in mind who may access their own profiles on such websites. Staff should therefore take care as to the information they display about themselves, their personal lives and should not make any reference to individuals within school of a detrimental nature. As a rule, members of staff should not make any reference to pupils or their parents on social media. They should not disclose personal information on their profile, and at no time should they post anything of a lewd/explicit/racist/discriminatory etc. nature or any other action which is capable of bringing the school into disrepute. Staff should also ensure that they have installed, and are using, the most appropriate level of privacy settings.

Individuals, who work with children and young people, should not make, view or access illegal or inappropriate images of children. Individuals, who work with children and young people and others, with whom they may be in a position of trust, should exercise caution when using social networking sites and avoid inappropriate communication of any kind.

Staff should not post any images of employees, children, governors or anyone directly connected with the school whilst engaged in school activities without prior permission from the Principal. Before posting any images of school community members taken at events not related to school, for example at social events, permission should be directly sought from the parties involved.

Responsibilities of Parents/Guardians

Parents and Guardians will be made aware of their responsibilities regarding their use of social networking by the school. They will have easy access to a copy of this policy, distributed each academic year. The policy will not only confirm their responsibilities but also make them aware that they should notify the school in writing, should they disagree with its content.

Methods of school communication with parents and interested parties include the prospectus, the website, Google Classroom, Class Dojo, newsletters, letters and verbal discussion. Pictures taken of pupils within the school setting/at school events should not be posted on social networking sites without parents' permission. It is recommended that photographs of school community members be confined to the school's website, which is a much more controlled online environment.

Parents should report any incidents of cyber bullying (and/or bullying) as soon as they are discovered. Complaints made in public through social media are detrimental and could be damaging to the school community and as such are not beneficial to the children. Parents/carers should bear this in mind before publishing such complaints online. Any complaints, should they arise, should be pursued through the appropriate channels by making contact with the member of staff involved, the Vice Principal or the Principal. A meeting can then be arranged at a mutually convenient time to bring about a resolution to the issue. Parents/ carers should also be aware that defamatory comments made online are unlawful and may result in legal action. *The school will take a 'zero tolerance' approach to defamatory comments made online about any member of staff. If the offensive comments are made by a third party as part of a post that a parent has originally published, the school will still hold the parent responsible.*

Guidance/Protection for Pupils and Staff on Using Social Networking

Any breaches of this policy will be fully investigated. Where it is found that there has been a breach of policy this may result in action being taken under the Education Authority Disciplinary Procedures. 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. No pupil under 13 should be accessing social networking sites. This is the guidance from both Facebook and MSN. There is a mechanism on Facebook where pupils who are underage can be reported via the **Help** screen. http://www.facebook.com/help/contact.php?show_form=underage

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 with Brownlee Primary School.

Appendix 1

Advice from Department of Education

General advice to everyone:

- Don't share personal information or images with people you don't know.
- Don't accept friend requests with someone you don't know – not everyone online may be who they say they are.
- Set privacy settings on all devices so that only people you know can view your account.
- Don't post anything online that you are not happy to be shared, particularly inappropriate images or videos. It may seem like a bit of fun with friends at the time but there is always a chance those images could be shared or get into the wrong hands and could lead to harmful situations such as stalking, abuse or blackmail.

- If someone has made you feel uncomfortable or you have had disturbing interaction online, tell police or a trusted adult. You can ring the police on 101 or for help and advice ring Childline on 0800 1111 or Lifeline on 0808 808 8000.
- The internet can be a great place but it is important to remember there are people out there who may wish to abuse, exploit, intimidate or bully you online – if this happens to you, tell someone immediately.
- Remember that if things do go wrong online, there are people who can help.
- If you receive any inappropriate images or links, it is important that you do not forward it to anyone else. Contact police or tell a trusted adult immediately. By doing this you could help prevent further such incidents. You will not get into trouble.

General advice to parents:

- The most important thing is to have conversations with your children - talk to them about the benefits and dangers of the internet so that you can empower them to use the internet safely.
- Cultivate an interest in their online activities - their favourite websites, online games and interests and keep an eye on what they are doing online.
- Don't be afraid to ask your children who they are talking to online and what they are talking about and remind them how important it is to tell a trusted adult if something happens online that makes them feel uncomfortable or worried because there are people who can help.
- Become a 'net-savvy' parent - the best safeguard against online dangers is being informed. Jump in and learn the basics of the Internet - read articles, take a class, and talk to other parents. You don't have to be an expert to have a handle on your child's online world.
- Go to www.getsafeonline.org for lots of useful advice and information on how to stay safe online. www.safeguardingni.org will also provide information for parents and carers on Online Safety.

THIS POLICY WILL BE REVIEWED IN 2022.