



Founded 1860

SOCIAL NETWORKING GUIDELINES (Personal Use)

Scope

This guidance is applicable to all employees of Chowbent Primary School and covers all uses of social networking applications which are used privately.

The guidance has been produced to ensure that:

- the school is not exposed to legal challenge
- the reputation of the school is not adversely affected
- employees do not put themselves in a vulnerable position
- employees understand how information provided via social networking applications can be representative of the school.

This guidance should be read alongside the following school policies:

- Disciplinary, Dignity at Work
- Acceptable Use
- ICT Security Policies and Procedures

Principles

The school recognises that many employees use the internet at home for personal purposes, and many participate in social networking on websites such as Facebook, My Space, You Tube, Twitter and Friends Reunited. In the majority of cases this is uncomplicated and trouble-free and whilst the school respects an employee's right to a private life and has no wish to interfere with this, when using such sites employees must consider the potential impact it could have on their professional position, their own reputation and that of the school. The following list identifies some occasions where an employee's personal life and work life can start to overlap.

- By identifying themselves as employees of Chowbent Primary School on profiles, the perception of users will be that staff are representative of the school and it is therefore important that employees are mindful of the professional standards that are expected of them. Anything posted, including innocent remarks, have the potential to escalate into something that could potentially damage the image and reputation of the school or undermine its work with service users. The originating comment may be traced back to an employee of Chowbent Primary School and even if they have not been involved in the latter stages of the comments they may find themselves subject to a disciplinary investigation.
- The use of social networking applications has implications for our duty to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults. Adults who work with these groups should not have any social contact with them or their families, unless the reason for this contact has been firmly established and agreed with senior managers.
- Customers making complaints search the web for information about the staff involved in their case – finding social networking sites, blogs and photo galleries that could give fuel to their concerns or help them to identify personal information about them
- Journalists increasingly use the web to research stories, and may reprint photos or comments that they find
- Law firms research social networking sites as a matter of course in preparing divorce, private law children's cases and other court proceedings
- Some organisations also look on social networking sites to find out information about people applying for jobs

Guidelines

The following guidelines have been developed for employees using social networking sites in order to ensure that they are not putting themselves into a vulnerable position. Employees must ensure that they:

1. Do not conduct themselves in a way that is detrimental to the school
2. Do not use such sites to air grievances about the school, their manager, fellow colleagues or service users
3. Do not allow their interaction on these websites to damage working relationships between members of staff and parents, children or other stakeholders;
4. Their contacts do not include any vulnerable client groups, including children and young people, and;
5. Refrain from posting photographs of themselves or colleagues taken at work in the school, or visitors within the school.

Security and identity theft

Employees should be aware that social networking websites are a public forum, particularly if the employee is part of a "network". Employees should

not assume that their entries on any website will remain private. Employees should never send abusive or defamatory messages.

Employees must also be security conscious and should take steps to protect themselves from identity theft, for example by restricting the amount of personal information that they give out. Social networking websites allow people to post detailed personal information such as date of birth, place of birth and favourite football team, which can form the basis of security questions and passwords. In addition, employees should:

- ensure that no information is made available, or referred to, that could provide a person with unauthorised access to the school and/or any confidential information; and
- inform their manager immediately if they suspect that their personal site has been compromised or accessed by an unauthorised person
- refrain from recording any confidential information regarding the school on any social networking website
- Check their security settings on social networking site so that information is only visible to the people who they want to see it.
- Put their name into an internet search engine to see what people can find out about them.
- Help friends and colleagues out by letting them know if they spot things on their pages that might be misconstrued.

Defamatory Statements

Material posted on a site may be defamatory if it contains something about the school, one of its employees, members, partners, organisations, service users or other individuals that an employee may come into contact with during the course of their work that is not true and undermines the school's reputation. For example, photographs or cartoons that may have been doctored to associate the school, its employees or partners with a discreditable act.

Libellous Statements

Material posted on a site may be considered libellous if it is in permanent form and directly or indirectly clearly identifies the school or one of its employees, members, partners or service users with material that damages their reputation.

Employees should always use their own judgment but should bear in mind:

- That information that they share through social networking sites is still subject to copyright, Data Protection, Freedom of Information and Safeguarding legislation
- The Code of Conduct
- Other relevant Council Policies (e.g. Dignity at Work, Whistleblowing Procedure, Equality Policy and policies and guidance regarding acceptable use of email, intranet and internet whilst at work)

Disciplinary Action

In situations where it becomes known that an employee has posted potentially damaging material on a site, this could constitute misconduct or gross misconduct and will be dealt with in accordance with the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure. In addition the school will write to the employee advising them of the rights that have allegedly been infringed, i.e, that it considers the material to be defamatory, a breach of contract, and/or a breach of article 8 of the European Convention of Human Rights. The employee will also be asked to remove the offending material from the site.

Equality

Chowbent Primary School will ensure that, when implementing the Social Networking Guidelines, no employee will be disadvantaged on the basis of their gender or transgender, marital status or civil partnership, racial group, religion or belief, sexual orientation, age, disability, pregnancy or maternity, social or economic status or caring responsibility. This means that the guidelines may need to be adjusted to cater for the specific needs of an individual including the provision of information in alternative formats where necessary.

Monitoring

These guidelines will be monitored regularly to ensure that they are operating fairly, consistently and effectively.

Review

The guidelines will be reviewed in the light of operating experience and/or changes in legislation.

Useful Links: Code of Conduct
 Disciplinary Procedure
 Dignity at Work Procedure
 Acceptable Use Policy
 ICT Security Policies

Review Date: /...../.....

Code of Conduct

As a staff at Chowbent Primary School we have agreed the following Code of Conduct.

We will:

1. Treat all members of the school community equally, with respect and sensitivity, regardless of ability, gender, age, ethnicity or position in school.
2. Be good role models for pupils and uphold a professional code of conduct within the school and local environment.
3. Maintain professional levels of confidentiality in all aspects relating to school life, including the use of social networking sites e.g. Facebook.
4. Engage in a professional dialogue when our ideas and opinions differ recognising that the final decision rests with the line manager. In exceptional circumstances when opinions cannot be reconciled the headteacher may become involved.
5. Speak appropriately to, and in front of, children, their families and staff.
6. Ensure the supervision of children at all times.
7. Adhere to the school dress code – ie to dress appropriately for the task in hand

Chowbent Primary School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

Name:

Job Title

Signature