



Social Media Policy (Including Facebook)

Our Ethos

“Kircubbin Integrated Primary School exists to:

- promote the spiritual, moral, cultural, intellectual and physical development of its pupils and thereby enable them to make a valuable contribution to the school life and to that of the wider world;
- prepare pupils with the skills for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life;
- help pupils to develop appropriate concepts, skills and attitudes which help them to gain a lasting sense of wonder, excitement, responsibility and achievement;
- enable pupils to appreciate the important contribution science and technology make to society and to develop within them the skills to become involved in that contribution if they so wish in later life.”

This ethos permeates all aspects of school life and is evident in our development of ICT skills with pupils. We recognise that the digital world is changing constantly and that our pupils need to be empowered with the right emotional and decision-making skills as well as technical skills to navigate it successfully and safely. This is particularly true of social media. Today people are choosing to communicate with family, friends and strangers through multiple social platforms.

This school respects the desire of staff members and parents to communicate using social media platforms. We recognise that as a school we hold no jurisdiction in policing social media platforms, but urge the whole school community to work collaboratively to communicate appropriately. Conversely, we understand that as a school we have a responsibility to protect individual members of the school community and act aptly to inappropriate or threatening communication.

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.

Social Media

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 are 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.

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 what they're posting onto the Internet.

Responsibilities of Staff

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.

With regard to relationships, individuals who work with children and young people whose primary relationship is through school should not attempt to establish an online relationship, which might include:

- communication of a personal nature
- inappropriate dialogue through the Internet
- the sending of emails or text messages of an inappropriate nature

Where the primary relationship is not through school, for instance a family member or close family friend, we would advise cautious, transparent communication that is inclusive of parents/carers.

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

Staff relationships with children and young people should, at all times, remain professional and they should not correspond with children and young people through such 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 their careers, 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 school or individuals within it. We believe that they should also ensure that they have installed, and are using, the highest level of privacy settings.

Individuals who work with children and young people, should not make, view or access, illegal or inappropriate images of children.

Responsibilities of Parents/Carers

Parents and carers will be made aware of their responsibilities regarding their use of social networking through the implementation of this policy.

Methods of school communication include the prospectus, the website, newsletters, letters, texting service, Facebook, the school app and verbal discussion. It is recommended that pictures taken of pupils within the school setting/at school events should not be posted on social networking sites without the pupils' parents' permission.

Parents/carers should not post comments on social networking sites about any member of the school community or any school policy, process or procedure. Parents should be aware that comments which could be defamatory could be subject to legal proceedings.

It would be of benefit to the school that if any parent has a concern, comment or complaint in relation to any school related matter that they voice it through the correct forum/ procedure, such as speaking to a teacher/ principal, or following the School Complaints' Procedure.

The school Facebook page is intended to be a one-way means of communication to inform parents and share the schools' successes. As it would be impossible to respond to all comments on the page, no comments will receive a response. If threatening or inappropriate comments are made, individuals will be reported and blocked from the page in future. If anyone is aware of an inappropriate comment posted on the school Facebook page they should report it to the school immediately.

Guidance/protection for pupils on using social networking

There are a number of useful guides and links on internet safety (including safety on social networking sites) available on the school website's 'Useful Links' section.

Many social network platforms do not permit children under 13 to have an account, e.g. Facebook and Instagram.

(There is a mechanism on Facebook where children below the age of 13 who are using Facebook can be reported via the Help screen. <https://en-gb.facebook.com/help/157793540954833>)