



Social Media Policy 2021

Our Ethos

“Rathmore Primary School seeks to be a vibrant, caring community dedicated to the development of each pupil.

Through a culture of high expectation, pupils will learn the knowledge, attitudes and skills they need to realise their full potential, excelling now and in the future.

Together we are committed to fostering independence and responsibility, individually and collectively.”

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 chooses to communicate using social media platforms, such as Twitter and Facebook, and respects the desire of staff members and parents to do so too. 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 just 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 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 of 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 school successes. As it would be cumbersome to moderate comments, all comments made on the Facebook page will be deleted. If threatening or inappropriate comments are made, individuals will be reported and blocked from the page in future.

Guidance/protection for pupils on using social networking

Many social network platforms do not permit children under 13 to have an account, eg Facebook.

(There is a mechanism on Facebook where children below the age of 13 who are using Facebook can be reported via the Help screen.

http://www.facebook.com/help/contact.php?show_form=underage