Telford Infant School

LOVING LEARNING

Every child to be an inquisitive, resilient and successful learner who is eager for their next challenge.

Parental use of Social Networking and Internet Sites Policy

Policy Manager:	Headteacher
Date of latest update:	March 2019
Date of next review:	March 2021

This Policy is available for Staff and Governors on One Drive.
It is also available for parents on the school website and on request from the school office.

Overview

Social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and Twitter are now widely used. This type of media allows people to communicate in ways that were not previously possible. Additionally other communication methods have recently become popular that enable groups to be set up allowing a number of people to communicate and share information, such as WhatsApp.

However, such sites and communication methods can be inappropriately used by some people as a means of expressing inaccurate, negative and/or offensive views about schools and their staff. This document sets out the Telford Infant School (TIS) approach to parental use of such sites and communication methods and sets out the procedures the school will follow and the action the school may take if parents have used such facilities in a way the school deems to be inappropriate.

When reference is made to 'parent' in this document, this also includes carers, relatives or anyone associated with TIS.

Objectives

The objectives of this policy are to:

- Encourage social networking sites and other means of group communication to be used in a beneficial and positive way by parents.
- Safeguard pupils and staff from any negative effects from the use of social networking sites and other methods of group communication.
- Safeguard the reputation of TIS from abuse on social networking sites.
- Clarify what TIS considers to be appropriate and inappropriate use of social networking sites and other methods of group communication by parents.

Appropriate use of Social Networking sites and other Methods of Group Communication by Parents

Social networking sites and other group methods of communication have the potential to enhance the learning and achievement of pupils and to enable parents to access information about TIS and provide feedback efficiently and easily. In addition, TIS recognises that many parents and other family members will have personal social networking accounts, which they might use to discuss or share views about school issues with friends and acquaintances.

As a guide, individuals should consider the following prior to posting any information on social networking sites and other group communication methods about TIS, its staff or its pupils:

- Whether this is an appropriate place to raise concerns, give feedback or express views.
- Whether private and confidential discussions with TIS would be more appropriate, e.g. if there are serious allegations being made or concerns being raised. Social media/internet sites and other group communication methods should not be used to name individuals and make abusive comments about those people. **Parents should contact the school to discuss any concerns they may have.**
- Whether such comments are likely to cause emotional or reputational harm to staff or pupils, particularly if a complaint has been made and TIS has not yet had a chance to investigate that complaint.
- The reputational impact that the posting of such material may have on TIS; any detrimental harm that TIS may suffer as a result of the posting and the impact that such a posting may have on pupils' learning.

Inappropriate use of Social Networking sites and other Methods of Group Communication by Parents

Although social networking sites and other group communication methods may appear to be the quickest and easiest way to express frustrations or concerns about TIS (and those associated with it), it is rarely appropriate to do so. Other channels are much better suited to this. Examples of appropriate actions are:

- Having a confidential discussion with a Class teacher, Phase Leader or SENDCo.
- Contacting the Headteacher.
- Using the school's formal complaints procedure.

TIS considers the following examples to be inappropriate uses of social networking sites and group communication methods. This list is non-exhaustive and intended to provide examples only:

- Making allegations about staff or pupils at TIS or cyber-bullying.
- Making complaints about TIS or staff at TIS.
- Making defamatory statements about TIS or staff at TIS.
- Posting knowingly inaccurate, negative or offensive comments about specific pupils or staff at TIS.

- Posting comments denigrating someone because of their gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion or beliefs, age, because they have had gender reassignment, because they are married or in a civil partnership or because they are pregnant or a mother; (i.e. they have a 'protected characteristic')
- Posting comments that threaten violence.

Parents should also ensure that their children are not using social networking/internet sites etc in an inappropriate manner. It is expected that parents explain to their children what is acceptable to post online. Parents are also expected to monitor their children's online activity, including in relation to their use of social media should they be old enough to use it.

Procedure that TIS will follow in the event of inappropriate use

TIS will always try to deal with concerns raised by parents in a professional and proportionate manner and understands that parents may not always realise when they have used social networking sites or group communication methods inappropriately.

Therefore, as a first step, TIS will usually discuss the matter with the parent to try and resolve the matter and to ask that the relevant information be removed. If the parent refuses to do this and continues to use such sites in a manner TIS considers inappropriate, TIS will consider taking the following action:

- Set out the school's concerns to the parents concerned in writing, requesting that the material in question is removed.
- Take legal advice and/or legal action where the information posted is defamatory in any way or if the circumstances warrant this.
- Contact the police where TIS feels it appropriate – for example, if it considers a crime (such as harassment) has been committed; or in cases where the posting denigrates someone because they have a protected characteristic (see above for the definition of these); or is considered to be grossly obscene; or is threatening violence.
- If the inappropriate comments have been made on a school website or online forum, TIS may take action to block or restrict that individual's access to that website or forum.
- Contact the host/provider of the Social Networking site to complain about the content of the site and ask for removal of the information.
- Take other legal action against the individual.