

# Policy for Parental Use on Academy Social Networking & Internet Sites



## OVERVIEW

Social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are now widely used and enable communication in ways that were not previously possible. This policy sets out the appropriate and inappropriate use of any social media platform or website associated with Thorpe Primary Academy. Where this document refers to a “parent”, this term also includes carers, relatives, and any other individuals associated with the Academy.

## OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Encourage social networking sites to be used in a beneficial and positive way.
- Safeguard pupils, staff and anyone associated with the Academy.
- Clarify what the Academy considers to be appropriate and inappropriate use of social networking sites by parents and other users.
- Set out the action the Academy will consider taking if parents make inappropriate or unlawful use of social networking sites.

## APPROPRIATE USE

Social networking sites have the potential to enhance the learning and achievement of pupils and enable parents to access information about the Academy and provide feedback efficiently and easily. In addition, the Academy recognises that many parents and other family members will have personal social networking accounts, which they might use to discuss/share views about academy issues with friends and acquaintances. As a guide, individuals should consider the following before posting any information on social networking sites about the Academy, its staff, its pupils, or anyone else associated with the Academy:

- Is the social networking site the appropriate channel to raise concerns, give this feedback or express these views?
- Would private and confidential discussions with the Academy be more appropriate? E.g. if there are serious allegations being made/concerns being raised. Social media/internet sites should not be used to name individuals and make abusive comments about those people. Please contact the academy to discuss any concerns you may have.
- Are such comments likely to cause emotional or reputational harm to individuals which would not be justified, particularly if the Academy has not yet had a chance to investigate a complaint?
- The reputational impact that the posting of such material may have to the Academy, any detrimental harm that the Academy may suffer as a result of the posting, and the impact that such a posting may have on pupils' learning.

## INAPPROPRIATE USE

Although social networking sites may appear to be the quickest and easiest way to express frustrations or concerns about the Academy (and those associated with it), it is rarely appropriate to do so. Other channels, such as a private and confidential discussion with the Academy, or using the Academy's formal complaints process are much better suited to this.

The Academy considers the following examples to be inappropriate uses of social networking sites. *(This list is non-exhaustive and intended to provide examples only):*

- Making allegations about staff or pupils at the Academy.
- Making complaints about the Academy or staff members.
- Making defamatory statements about the Academy or staff members.
- Posting negative/offensive comments about specific pupils/staff at the Academy.
- Posting racist comments.
- Posting comments which threaten violence.
- Any form of cyber-bullying

Parents should also ensure that their children are not using social networking/internet sites and mobile apps in an inappropriate manner. It is expected that parents/carers explain to their children what is acceptable to post online.

## MINIMUM AGE LIMITS

Parents/carers are also expected to monitor their children's online activity, including their use of social media and for adhering to minimum age limits set by application providers. Although minimum age limits are in place, parents should also consider whether their child has a sufficient understanding of the platform and the maturity to use it safely and responsibly.

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|---------------------------|--|
| • Facebook: 13 years old  | • Reddit: 13 years old                   |
| • Instagram: 13 years old | • Twitch: 13 years old                   |
| • WhatsApp: 13 years old  | • Pinterest: 13 years old                |
| • Snapchat: 13 years old  | • YouTube (normal account): 13 years old |
| • TikTok: 13 years old    | • X (formerly Twitter): 13 years old     |
| • Discord: 13 years old   | • Bluesky: 13 years old                  |

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## PROCEDURE THE ACADEMY WILL FOLLOW FOR INAPPROPRIATE USE

Thorpe Primary Academy will always try to deal with concerns raised by parents in a professional and appropriate manner and understands that parents may not always realise when they have used social networking sites inappropriately. Therefore, as a first step, the Academy will usually discuss the matter with the parent to try and resolve the matter and to ask that the relevant information be removed from the social networking site in question.

If the parent refuses to do this and continues to use social networking sites in a manner that is inappropriate, the Academy will consider taking the following action:

- Take legal advice and/or legal action where the information posted is defamatory in any way or if the circumstances warrant this.
- Set out the Academy's concerns to you in writing, giving you a warning and requesting that the material in question is removed.
- Contact the Police where the Academy feels it appropriate – for example, if it considers a crime (such as harassment) has been committed, or in cases where the posting has a racial element, is considered to be grossly obscene or is threatening violence.
- If the inappropriate comments have been made on the academy website or online forum, the Academy 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.

## **PARENTAL CONCERNS**

Should parents have any concerns about inappropriate content being posted on social media or internet sites regarding the Academy, or members of staff or pupils, please contact the Academy to report this.