# Ballywalter Primary School



# Social Media Policy

Review Date: October 2019

Social Media Policy

## Mission Statement

As a school we wish to uphold a positive image with all stakeholders; pupils, staff, parents, governors and community members.  We strive at all times to create an environment where there is mutual respect, where each person is valued as an individual and pastoral care is an integral part of education.  Each pupil will be encouraged to fulfill his or her moral, intellectual, spiritual, physical, social, aesthetic and emotional potential.

Use of ICT allows all pupils to gain confidence and ability in an ever-changing society and prepares them for the challenge of a rapidly developing and evolving technological world.

- To provide opportunities to enable all our staff, pupils and parents to be confident, competent and independent users of ICT.
- To provide an environment where access to ICT resources is natural and commonplace.
- To ensure ICT has a fundamental role in developing and enhancing our school's key learning aims in promoting the pupils' educational, physical and social needs.
- ICT encourages our staff and pupils to work collaboratively.

## Social Networking

Social networking is everywhere. It is common to find parents, children, co-workers and others on such sites.  With social networks people across the world have access to tools and options that were previously non-existent. However, there are now just as many new opportunities to connect as there are to get into potential danger.  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.  Often there is a minimal amount of control over who ultimately gets to see our post.

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.

Social Media Policy

**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 should not attempt to establish a 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

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.  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.

Individuals who work with children and young people and others, with whom they may be in a position of trust, should exercise caution when using social networking sites and avoid inappropriate communication of any kind.

Staff should not post any images of employees, children, governors or anyone directly connected with the school whilst engaged in school activities without prior permission from the Principal.  Before posting any images of school community members taken at events not related to school, for example at social events, permission should be directly sought from the parties involved.

Social Media Policy

**Responsibilities of parents/carers**

Parents and carers will be made aware of their responsibilities regarding their use of social networking.

Methods of school communication include the prospectus, the website, newsletters, letters and verbal discussion. Pictures taken of pupils within the school setting/at school events should not be posted on social networking sites without parents' permission. Before posting any images of school community members taken at events not related to school, for example at social events, permission should be directly sought from the parties involved.

Complaints made in public through social media are detrimental and possibly damaging to the school community and as such are not beneficial to the children. Parents/carers should not post inaccurate, malicious or fictitious comments on social networking sites about any member of the school community or any school policy, process or procedure. Malicious or inappropriate comments will be reported and may result in accounts being removed. Fictitious or defamatory comments may also result in legal action. Action will also be taken if any inappropriate comments are made in which a member of the school community can be identified from the content of the comment. Where appropriate, comments will be reported to the PSNI.

**School Twitter Account**

In order to share the children's work and achievements, each class teacher will operate and monitor a class Twitter account. A school Twitter account is also used to share information with parents. Parents' permission for use of their child(ren)'s photographs will be sought. If pupils' photos are used on Twitter, then their names will not be used. Care should be taken to cover pupils' names visible on work/certificates etc.

**Guidance/protection for pupils on using social networking**

No pupil under 13 should be accessing social networking sites. This is the guidance from both Facebook and MSN. There is a mechanism on Facebook where pupils can be reported via the Help screen. http://www.facebook.com/help/contact.php?show_form=underage