

**Thomas Gray Primary**  
**SOCIAL MEDIA**  
**AND MOBILE PHONE POLICY**



**Updated September 2020**

## **Introduction**

Social media and social networking sites play an important role in the lives of many people, both children and adults. Whilst the Headteacher and Governing Body of Thomas Gray Primary School recognise that such sites can pose risks, they equally appreciate the many benefits that they can bring to individuals. This policy is intended to give clarity to the way in which the school expects social media to be used by both its pupils and staff, as well as those visiting the school in whatever capacity (i.e. volunteers or contractors). It will also provide guidance to parents. Also included are the school's policies on mobile phone use within the school site and the use of digital photography.

### **There are 5 key areas:**

- A. The use of social networking sites by pupils within school**
- B. The use of social networking by staff in a personal capacity**
- C. Comments posted by parents/carers**
- D. Dealing with incidents of online bullying**
- E. Use of mobile phones and digital photography policy**

### **\*COVID19 Updates**

#### **A. The use of social networking sites by pupils within school**

In terms of private use of social networking sites, including Facebook and Instagram to name two, it is generally understood that children under the age of 13 are not permitted to be registered. Thomas Gray Primary appreciates, however, that some pupils may have their own social network accounts. The school's policy on pupils visiting these sites during the school day is straightforward. Such sites should not be used/accessed in school. They are also blocked for children's use on our network.

## **B. Use of social networking by staff in a personal capacity**

It is very likely that a high proportion of staff will have their own social networking site accounts. It is important for them to protect their professional reputation by ensuring that they use their personal accounts in an appropriate manner.

Guidelines are issued to staff (please note that Thomas Gray has its own Social Media Policy):

- Staff must **never** add pupils as 'friends' into their personal accounts. This includes ex-pupils still under the age of 16.
- Staff are **strongly advised** not to add parents as 'friends' into their personal accounts.
- Staff **must not** post comments, whether positive or negative, about the school, pupils, parents or colleagues including members of the Governing Body.
- Staff **must not** post information or opinions about Thomas Gray Primary School or pictures of school events.
- Staff should be careful when airing political or personal preferences and opinions on social media, either of their own or others. Staff should always be mindful of how these views may reflect on the school.
- Staff **must not** use social networking sites within lesson times (for personal use). Whilst the school appreciates that staff breaks are their own personal time, it is strongly suggested that social media sites are not accessed during the school day.
- Staff should only use social networking in a way that does not conflict with the current National Teacher's Standards.
- Staff should review and adjust their privacy settings to give them the appropriate level of privacy and confidentiality.
- Staff should read and comply with 'Guidance for Safer Working Practice for Adults who Work with Children and Young People'.
- Inappropriate Social Media use by staff should be referred to the Headteacher in the first instance and may lead to disciplinary action.

## **C. Comments posted by 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. School policies and documents provide further information regarding appropriate channels of communication and means of resolving differences of opinion. Effective communication following principles of mutual respect is the best means of ensuring safe social media use, and with this in mind the school has issued the following guidelines:

- Parents **must not** post pictures of pupils, other than their own children, on social networking sites where these photographs have been taken at a school event.
- Parents should not identify individuals as members of school staff on social networking sites.
- Parents should make complaints through official school channels rather than posting them on social networking sites.
- Parents should not post malicious or fictitious comments on social networking sites about any member of the school community.

#### **D. Dealing with incidents of online bullying/inappropriate use of social networking sites**

The school's Anti-Bullying Policy sets out the processes and sanctions regarding any type of bullying by a child on the school roll.

In the case of inappropriate use of social networking by parents, the Governing Body at Thomas Gray will contact the parent asking them to remove such comments and seek redress through the appropriate channels such as the Complaints Policy and will send a letter. (Appendix 1)

The Governing Body understands that, "There are circumstances in which police involvement is appropriate. These include where postings have a racist element or where violence is threatened or encouraged." Furthermore, "Laws of defamation and privacy still apply to the web and it is unlawful for statements to be written...which:

- expose (*an individual*) to hatred, ridicule or contempt
  - cause (*an individual*) to be shunned or avoided
  - lower (*an individual's*) standing in the estimation of right-thinking members of society or
  - disparage (*an individual in their*) business, trade, office or profession."
- (National Association of Headteachers)

## **E. Use of Mobile Phones and Digital Photography Policy**

**Children are not allowed to have mobile phones in school.** If children bring a phone to school they should take it to the school office where it will be kept until the end of the school day.

Pupils at Thomas Gray Primary School have their photograph taken in order to provide evidence of their achievements for their developmental records.

A current, up to date list of those pupils whose parents / carers have refused permission for them to be photographed is kept in the school office and is accessible to all staff.

**Staff, visitors, volunteers and students are not permitted to use their own mobile phones, they must be locked away in a locked cupboard or drawer in classroom or left in the office.**

### **Procedures**

- Under the data protection act of 1998 school must seek parental consent to take photographs and use video recorders. Photographs will be stored on the school network which is password protected until the school ceases to operate, should this occur then all photographs will be shredded or deleted from the school network.
- The school's digital cameras must not leave the school setting (unless on an educational visit).
- Photographs are printed in the setting by staff and images are then removed from the camera memory.
- Photographs of children may be taken and used in accordance with parental consent obtained via the Media Permission Form.
- Only photographs containing children whose parents have given their consent may be placed on the school website or given to third parties.
- Often photographs may contain other children in the background.
- Events such as Sports Day, outings, Christmas and fundraising events may be photographed and/or recorded on video by staff, but always in full view of all attending. These images must be stored on secure school files only.
- Parents must not post photographs or video containing other children on social media websites. (See Policy above).
- Many mobile phones have inbuilt cameras so staff mobile phones must not be used to take pictures of children in our school.

- Visitors may only use their phones outside the building and should be challenged if seen using a camera inappropriately or photographing children.
- The use of cameras and mobile phones are prohibited in toilets.
- The school appreciates that staff occasionally need to make personal calls during school hours. However, these should be kept to a minimum. Excessive making, or receiving, of personal calls could lead to disciplinary action.
- All school cameras, iPads and other image recording devices should be kept securely at all times and used with appropriate authority
- *Apple iWatches are allowed to be worn by staff members, however, no photography or text messaging should be used in the classroom.*

To protect children we will:

#### **Within the school:**

- seek their consent for photographs to be taken or published (for example, on our website or in newspapers or publications)
- seek parental / carer consent for images of their children to be used. If consent is not given no images of that child will be used. An up-to-date list of those children whose image cannot be used is easily accessible via the office
- use only the child's first name with an image
- ensure that children are appropriately dressed
- encourage children to tell us if they are worried about any photographs that are taken of them.

#### **When off site, in a controlled environment:-**

- Ask those people involved to guarantee that any photographs taken will not be used on any social media site, explaining the reasons why. Lead staff must ensure that this is done.
- Alternatively, if possible gain written permission from parents before the visit for children for images of their child to be posted on social media sites. It is the lead member of staff's responsibility to ensure that only photographs containing children whose parents have given their written permission are posted onto social media sites.

#### **When pupils are visiting an uncontrolled site:-**

- Where the school cannot guarantee that photographs will not be taken and posted onto social media sites (e.g. at a football match), parents will be notified of this before the visit. If a parent is then concerned about their child's photograph being exposed on a social media site, then that parent should request that their child does not participate in the event.

## Sexting (Youth Produced Sexual Imagery)

Unfortunately, as mobile phones, tablets and other devices become more ubiquitous, there is an increased chance of inappropriate pictures / videos or text messages being produced and sent by pupils. As the guidance in the UK Council For Child Internet Safety's document '[Sexting in Schools and Colleges: Responding to Incidents and Safeguarding Young People](#)' (SiSaC) explains, the laws around 'sexting' are complex. This is particularly true with regard to written messages, and the guidance in this policy is therefore intended to cover the making and sending of images. In order to make this definition clearer, the SiSaC document replaces 'sexting' (a 'catch-all' term that is difficult to define) with the term 'Youth Produced Sexual Imagery'.

The sharing of sexual imagery of people under 18 by adults constitutes child sexual abuse. If the school becomes aware of any incidents of this it will **always** contact the police

The situation becomes more complex when a person under the age of 18 creates or shares sexual imagery. In law this is illegal, even if the image of a person under 18 has been created by themselves. If the school becomes aware of any such images it will always treat the matter as a safeguarding incident and, unless there are exceptional circumstances, contact the parents / carers of the children involved. However, as the SiSaC document states,

*The law criminalising indecent images of children was created long before mass adoption of the internet, mobiles and digital photography. It was also created to protect children and young people from adults seeking to sexually abuse them or gain pleasure from their sexual abuse. It was not intended to criminalise children*

The school will therefore use its discretion as to whether to involve outside agencies or keep the matter within school.

## COVID19 and Home Learning

If we have bubble closures due to COVID19 children will be at home and teachers will be completing online Zoom/Teams lessons. A teacher will also be online with another member of staff to make sure that there are no concerns regarding delivery or feedback of lessons.

We would appreciate it as a school if staff and parents do not discuss closures or COVID19 related discussions online or on social media. We would ask anyone who are concerned regarding home learning or online blended learning to call the school or email your class teachers.

## Appendix 1

### Inappropriate Use of Social Networking Site

Dear Mr/Mrs.....

It has come to the attention of the Thomas Gray Primary Governing Body that inappropriate comments regarding the school/members of the school community have been made on a social networking site.

As these comments do not comply with the expectations set out in the school's Social Networking Policy you are respectfully asked to remove them from the website.

We would encourage you to enter into productive communication with the school in order to resolve any outstanding differences. The school has an 'open door' policy with regard to dealing with parental communication and there are also policies in place such as the Complaints Policy if required.

Yours sincerely

Chair of Governing Body

This policy was approved by the school's governing body on:

Date.....

Signed by:

..... Headteacher

..... Chair of Governors

In line with the school's guidelines this policy will be reviewed.

Next review date: **September 2020**