

St Thomas More Catholic Primary School

Social Media Policy

Adopted by Governing Body: November 2024

Review: November 2025

Social media sites play an important role in the lives of many people, including children. The school recognises that social networking can bring many benefits and opportunities to understand, engage and communicate with audiences in new ways, but there are also potential risks. The aim of this document is to give clarity to the way in which social media sites are to be used by pupils, staff, parents, other family members, governors and other volunteers at St Thomas More Catholic Primary School. All members of the school community should bear in mind that information they share through social media and networks, even if it is on private spaces, is still subject to copyright, data protection and Freedom of Information legislation, the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006, and UK libel and defamation laws.

Facebook is targeted at older teenagers and adults. They have a no under 13 registration policy and recommend parental guidance for 13 to 16 year olds.

The following are extracts from Facebook's privacy policy:

"If you are under age 13, please do not attempt to register for Facebook or provide any personal information about yourself to us. If we learn that we have collected personal information from a child under age 13, we will delete that information as quickly as possible. If you believe that we might have any information from a child under 13, please contact us."

"We strongly recommend that minors 13 years of age or older ask their parents for permission before sending any information about themselves to anyone over the internet and we encourage parents to teach their children about safe internet use practices."

Snapchat also states, *"The minimum age is 13, in compliance with the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA)"*.

"Instagram requires everyone to be at least 13 years old before they can create an account"

You Tube terms clearly state that *"While we permit users between the ages of 13 and 17 to register for an account with parental permission, we do not allow children under the age of 13 to create an account"*

Guidance/Protection for Pupils

- Pupils should not access social networking sites whilst at school.
- All mobile phones should be handed in to the class teacher at the start of the school day and collected at home time. Failure to follow this guidance may result in a ban on mobile phones.
- No pupil should attempt to join a staff member's area on networking sites. If pupils attempt to do this, the member of staff is to inform the Headteacher and the pupil's

parents will be informed.

- Any improper contact or cyber bullying should be reported immediately to the class teacher as soon as it occurs. We have zero tolerance to cyber bullying.

Guidance / protection for staff using social networking

It is possible that a high proportion of staff will have their own social networking accounts. It is important that they protect their professional reputation, and that of the school, by ensuring that they use their personal sites in an appropriate manner.

Staff are advised as follows:

- That they familiarise themselves with social network sites' privacy settings in order to ensure that information is not automatically shared with a wider audience than intended. It is recommended that, as a minimum, all privacy settings are set to 'friends only', irrespective of use/purpose.
- That they do not conduct or portray themselves, or allow friends to portray them, in a manner which may:
 - Bring the school into disrepute;
 - Lead to valid parental complaints;
 - Be deemed as derogatory towards the school and/or its employees;
 - Be deemed as derogatory towards pupils, parents/carers or governors;
 - Bring into question their appropriateness to work with children;
 - Contravene current National Teacher Standards;
- That they do not form online friendships or enter into communication with parents/carers as this could lead to professional relationships being compromised.
- That they do not form online friendships or enter into online communication with pupils or any ex-pupil, who is under the age of 18, as this could lead to professional relationships being compromised, and/or safeguarding allegations being raised.
- That they do not post pictures of school events (without the Headteacher's consent) or make negative comments about school events.
- That if their use of social media/networking sites contravenes this policy, they may be subject to disciplinary action as it will be considered as gross misconduct.
- Employees should not identify themselves as a representative of the school.
- Inappropriate use by employees should be referred to the Headteacher in the first instance.
- Employees should refer to the guidance within their school Staff Handbook.

Creation of social media accounts by school staff for use in education

All social media services must be approved by the Headteacher in advance of any educational work being undertaken.

Comments posted by parents/carers on social media sites

Parents/carers will be made aware of their responsibilities regarding their use of social media via this policy (in particular when their child joins the school), the school website, letter and school newsletters.

- Parents/carers are asked not to post images (photos and videos) of pupils other than their own children on social media sites unless they have the permission of parents of other children pictured.
- Parents/carers are asked to raise queries, concerns or complaints directly with the school rather than posting them on social media.
- Parents/carers should not post malicious or fictitious comments on social media sites about any member of the school community.
- Parents/carers are asked to be respectful to all members of the school community and support the school by adhering to this policy.

Where appropriate, legal action will be taken by the school's governors.

Dealing with incidents of online (cyber) bullying

There are four UK statutes that cover the use of Internet technology in relation to bullying. All cases of online bullying will be dealt with in accordance with the school's Anti-Bullying policy. The school can take action with reference to any incident that takes place outside school hours if it:

- Could have repercussions for the orderly running of the school;
- Poses a threat to a member of the school community;
- Could adversely affect the reputation of the school, or its employees/governors.

Where appropriate, legal action will be taken by the school's governors.