



Social Networking Policy



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Introduction

Over recent years social media tools have become an integral feature of modern life, providing opportunities for organisations and individuals to engage and communicate. A key feature of many social media tools is their unparalleled ability to broadcast and receive information quickly and link to a whole network of people in a matter of seconds. It is also the case that material broadcast via Facebook and Twitter can persist in the digital world almost indefinitely, often reaching a wider audience than the author had originally intended.

Involvement in social networking sites such as Facebook & Twitter are an essential part of our lives, and bring many benefits. However, posting material, images or comments on sites can have an element of risk in relation to protecting children, and can also have a negative effect on an organisation's reputation or image.

As a public body responsible for the care and education of children, Termoncanice Primary School & Nursery Unit is committed to the responsible and appropriate use of social media.

This policy has been written to set out the key principles and code of conduct that we expect of all members of the Termoncanice community, including **staff, governors** and **families** with respect to their use of social networking sites.

Key Principles

Safeguarding children is a key responsibility of the entire Termoncanice community – parents, staff and governors. It is essential that everyone involved with our school considers this and acts responsibly if they are using social networking sites out of school. **Anyone working in the school either as a paid employee or volunteer must not communicate with children via social networking.**

Parents are responsible for ensuring children engage with age appropriate social media. They should look online for minimum registration ages for sites such as Facebook, as many are not deemed suitable for Primary age children.

Everyone at Termoncanice has a responsibility to ensure that they protect the reputation of the school, and to treat colleagues and members of the school with professionalism and respect.

It is important to protect everyone at Termoncanice Primary School & Nursery Unit from allegations and misinterpretations which can arise from the use of social networking sites.

Policy Aims:

This guidance is not intended to stifle legitimate debate, discussion or interfere with private use of social media tools. Along with our **right** to freedom of speech, we also have a **responsibility** to ensure that others are not harmed by our written words. This policy aims to:

- Clarify expectations about the use of social media tools by parents, carers, visitors and staff as it relates to Termoncanice Primary School & Nursery Unit.
- Outline the steps the school will take if it considers social media content to be offensive, inappropriate, inaccurate or otherwise unacceptable.
- Protect the reputation of Termoncanice Primary School & Nursery Unit and ensure that social media use supports its educational, spiritual and pastoral ethos.
- Support the use of existing school policies and procedures to resolve issues of concern.

Social Media Code of Conduct **for the Termoncanice Community**

- Termoncanice Primary School & Nursery Unit has a safeguarding duty to all of its pupils and will take appropriate action if it considers social media contents to compromise this. This can include
 - a) the possible or actual identification of a child through an online discussion; and
 - b) the use of photos without consent.
- Termoncanice Primary School & Nursery Unit has policies and procedures for a wide range of issues including bullying, attendance, additional needs and complaints. As such, social media tools are not an appropriate vehicle for progressing such matters. Schools will not engage with parents/carers via this route but will direct parents/carers to the appropriate procedure.
- Defamatory, offensive or derogatory comments regarding the school or any of the pupils/staff/parents at the school are not to be made on social media sites.
- When factually incorrect information is posted about the school via social media, the author(s) will be contacted by the school for its removal/correction.

The following are **not considered acceptable** at Termoncanice:

- The use of the school's name, logo, or any other published material without prior permission from the Principal. This applies to any published material including the internet or written documentation.
- The posting of any communication or images which link the school to any form of inappropriate conduct or which may damage the reputation of the school. This includes defamatory comments.
- The disclosure of confidential or business-sensitive information; or the disclosure of information or images that could compromise the security of the school.
- The posting of any images of employees, children, governors or anyone directly connected with the school whilst engaged in school activities without the prior permission of the Principal.

In addition to the above everyone at Termoncanice must ensure that they:

- Use social networking sites responsibly and ensure that neither their personal/professional reputation nor the school's reputation is compromised by inappropriate postings.
- Are aware of the potential of on-line identity fraud and to be cautious when giving out personal information about themselves which may compromise their personal safety and security.
- Do not make any derogatory, defamatory, rude, threatening or inappropriate comments about the school, our pupils, or anyone at or connected with the school.
- Respond to, or otherwise become involved in, any such post as detailed above made by another person online.
- Staff and Governors must not add parent/carers of school pupils as friends on Social networking sites such as Facebook, unless there is a pre-existing connection.

Potential and Actual Breaches of the Code of Conduct

In instances where there has been a breach of the above Code of Conduct, the following will apply:

- **Breach by a member of staff:** Where it is found that there has been a breach of this policy by a staff member, an investigation will ensue, and this may result in action being taken under the Disciplinary Procedure. A breach of this policy will be considered to be a serious disciplinary offence which is also contrary to the school's ethos and principles.
- **Breach by a parent/carer/pupil:** In the event that any pupil or parent/carer of a child being educated at Termoncanice is found to be posting libellous or defamatory comments on Facebook or other social network sites, they will be reported to the appropriate 'report abuse' section of the network site. All social network sites have clear rules about the content which can be posted on the site and they provide robust mechanisms to report contact or activity which breaches this.
- The poster will be contacted by phone and asked to remove what they have written. If the breach is of an abusive or threatening nature, a letter will be sent asking them to remove it. Depending upon the seriousness of the post, the police may be informed, and the person's right to enter the school premises revoked.
- In serious cases or for repeat offences, the school will also consider its legal options to deal with any such misuse of social networking and other sites.
- Our school community takes the issue of cyber bullying very seriously. Any use by a member of the school community to publicly humiliate, embarrass or otherwise distress another by inappropriate social network entry will be dealt with as a serious incident of bullying and/or harassment.