



Social Media Code of Conduct

1 Introduction

This code of practice provides employees with guidance to ensure that they are taking the necessary steps to protect themselves and others against cyber bullying.

It also provides employees with practical guidance on how they can ensure that their conduct in relation to social networking sites and electronic media is in accordance with the code of conduct for all Local Government employees as interpreted by Staffordshire County Council in relation to social networking sites and electronic media.

1.1 Guidelines for Social Networking

Online communities can help Blythe Bridge High School & Sixth Form connect with its stakeholders in many ways. At the same time, there are some cautionary lessons that have emerged from participating in online communities. Participants should take note of the following:

- You are legally liable for anything you write or present online. Employees and students can be disciplined by the school for commentary, content, or images that are defamatory, pornographic, proprietary, harassing or that can create a hostile work environment. You can also be sued by School employees, competitors, and any individual or company that views your commentary, content or images as defamatory, pornographic, proprietary, harassing or creating a hostile work environment. No written comment should be made that could be offensive to anyone in any of the seven Equality and Diversity strands: age, disability, gender/transgender, religion or belief, sexual orientation, socio-economic group.
- You are posting content onto the World Wide Web and cannot ensure who does and does not have access to your information.
- Information you post online may continue to stay on the World Wide Web even after you erase or delete that information from pages.
- Before participating in any online community understand that anything posted online is available to anyone in the world.
- Do not post information, photos or other items online that could reflect negatively on you, your family or Blythe Bridge High School & Sixth Form.
- Be discreet, respectful, gracious and as accurate as you can be in any comments or content you post online.

Staff are also referred to the Safeguarding Policy which reminds them that any form of personal relationship between staff and students who are under 18 years of age or are vulnerable adults, is expressly forbidden. This would include any form of personal conversation or comment through the medium of the Internet. Therefore, Staff should not be 'Facebook friends' with any students. If a staff member discovers an imposter account has been made in their name they should report it immediately.

1.2 Guidelines for Blogging

If teaching staff and/or a student own a blogging site the following guidelines should apply.

- Personal blogs should have clear disclaimers that the views expressed by the author in the blog is the author's alone and do not represent the views of the School. Be clear and write in first person. Make your writing clear that you are speaking for yourself and not on behalf of the School.
- Information published on your blog should comply with the School policies. This also applies to comments posted on other blogs, forums and social networking sites.
- Be respectful to the School's other employees, students and competitors.
- Social media activities should not interfere with work commitments.
- Your online presence reflects the School. Be aware that your actions captured via images, posts, or comments can reflect that of the School.
- Do not reference School employees or partners without their express consent.
- Respect copyright laws, and reference or cite sources appropriately. Plagiarism applies online as well.
- Company logos and trademarks may not be used without the written consent of the Business Manager as set out below.

2.1 Cyber Bullying

Definition: "Cyber bullying is the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), particularly mobile phones and internet, deliberately to upset someone else"

[Cyber bullying: Guidance issued by the DCSF 2007]

Staffordshire County Council supports the view that cyber bullying represents a cruel, dangerous and inescapable form of bullying that causes humiliation, stress and trauma to its victims, and so believes that cyber bullying is not acceptable and will not be tolerated.

Blythe Bridge High School & Sixth Form are committed to the view that cyber bullying is never acceptable and is not tolerated

2.2 Legislation

Although bullying is not a specific criminal offence, criminal law exists to prevent certain behaviours. These behaviours may constitute harassment, or cause a fear of violence. Sending indecent, grossly offensive or threatening letters, electronic communications or other articles to another person is illegal

Other legislation protects against the publication of obscene articles or data (e.g. over a school intranet), hacking into someone else's computer, invading their privacy, damaging their reputation or engaging in anti-social acts.

2.3 Protecting yourself against Cyber Bullying

There are simple measures that you can take to safeguard against cyber bullying:

- being careful about personal information and images posted on the internet
- not leaving your mobile phone or personal computer around for others to gain access or leaving details on view when left unattended
- choosing hard-to-guess passwords and not letting anyone else know them
- being aware of the risks of giving your mobile number or personal e-mail address to others
- making use of blocking facilities made available by website and service providers
- not replying or retaliating to a bullying message
- saving evidence of offending messages
- making sure you inform others of any mobile phone or online bullying or harassment in accordance with relevant policies.

2.4 What action you can take

- Complaints of cyber bullying are dealt with in accordance with our Anti-Bullying Policy. Complaints related to child protection are dealt with in accordance with school / LA child protection procedures. Cyber bullying complaints will be investigated to obtain any evidence available and you can support this process by:
- logging any incidents
- noting the dates, times and content of messages and, where possible, the sender's identity or web address.

Taking an accurate copy of the whole web page address, for example, helps service providers to locate offending material. Such evidence may be required also to show to those who need to know, including police. Saving evidence of texts and images on the device itself is useful. It is important they are not deleted.

In the non work environment it may be appropriate to report incidents of cyber bullying direct to an internet service provider or mobile phone company. Content may be blocked and / or removed if it is illegal or breaks the provider's own terms and conditions. Some providers issue conduct warnings to users and are able to delete the accounts of those who have broken the rules.

3. Safeguarding

In order to safeguard yourself and potentially vulnerable adults and young people who you may work with you should ensure that your behaviour with regard to social networking sites is consistent with the standards of behaviour expected in normal day to day interactions with vulnerable adults and young people.

Communication that is undertaken via social networking sites is comparable to 'one to one' interaction in other contexts, and individuals should avoid any activity which would lead any reasonable person to question their motivation and intentions.

You are reminded that it is expected that you:

- a) Always act in such a way as to promote and safeguard the well being and interests of service users and colleagues.
- b) Take all reasonable steps to ensure that relationships with service users and colleagues are such that there can be no suggestion of impropriety whether by word or action.
- c) Develop a friendly relationship between employee and service users, with clear boundaries. It is deemed an abuse of that professional relationship for an employee:
 - to enter into an improper relationship with a service user
 - to show favour towards a particular service user
 - to act in a threatening or aggressive manner or to use foul, abusive or profane language
 - to endeavour to exert an undue influence with regard to personal attitudes, opinions or behaviour which is in no way connected to the work of the Service.
- d) Take all reasonable steps to ensure that no action or omission on your part or within your sphere of influence is detrimental to the condition or safety of service users

In order to preserve these standards of behaviour it is recommended that you decline any request from an existing or previous service user to be a "friend" on your Social Network Site.

It is inappropriate to request contact with an existing or previous user of the service via this medium or any other form of electronic medium.

It is acknowledged that you may accept a service user as a "friend" unintentionally and where this occurs you are advised to ensure that you remove this access as soon as you become aware of their status. You should do this in a way that does not jeopardise your professional relationship and should inform your Line Manager, if any significant conversation or activity occurs.

All employees are advised to ensure that when setting up social networking sites they should make full use of the range of tools which enable the access to personal information to be restricted.

4 Conclusion

Where no guidelines exist, staff should use their professional judgement and take the most prudent action possible. Consult with the School's Business Manager if you are uncertain.

Media contacts about the School, our students, employees, partners, customers and competitors must be referred for co-ordination and guidance to the Director of Business & Finance.

Please note that any activity on School's internal systems are monitored and recorded. Any external web activity is monitored, recorded and filtered whilst accessed on the school network.

The breach of Social Media Code of Conduct and any content that would adversely affect the School could result in a disciplinary action.