



Stokes Wood Primary School - Social Media Policy – Parents/carers

Statement of Intent

Stokes Wood understands the benefits of using social media and we recognise that the majority of adults use social media in a positive and responsible manner. However, for a minority, such sites can be inappropriately used as a means of expressing negative or offensive views about school and their staff instead of approaching the school where concerns are more easily dealt with and more likely to be resolved.

If social media is misused, the school community can be negatively affected, which can include individual pupils, groups or classes of pupils or the reputation of the school.

This document sets out the school's approach to how we expect parents/carers to use social media including messaging apps (WhatsApp), with regard to the school and its reputation.

Legal Framework

This document has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- [Data Protection Act 2018](#)
- [UK General Data Protection Regulation \(GDPR\)](#)
- [Protection of Freedoms Act 2012](#)

This document operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Complaints Procedure
- Data Protection Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Safeguarding Policy

Objectives

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Encourage social networking sites to be used in a beneficial and positive way by parents/carers.
- Safeguard pupils, staff and anyone associated with the school from the negative effects of social media.
- Safeguard the reputation of the school from unwarranted abuse on social media.
- Clarify what the school considers to be appropriate and inappropriate use of social media by parents/carers.
- Set out the procedures the school will follow where it considers parents/carers have inappropriately or unlawfully used social media to the detriment of the school, staff or pupils, and anyone else associated with the school.
- Set out the action the school will consider taking if parents/carers use social media inappropriately.

Appropriate use of Social Networking Sites by Parents/Carers

Social media has the potential to enhance the learning and achievement of pupils and enable parents/carers to access information about school and provide feedback efficiently and easily. In addition, the school recognises that many parents/carers and other family members will have personal social networking accounts, which can be used to discuss/share views about school issues with friends and acquaintances. As a guide, individuals must consider the following prior to posting any information on social networking sites about the school, its staff, its pupils, or anyone else associated:

- Is the social networking site the appropriate channel to raise concerns, give this feedback or express these views?
- Would private and confidential discussions with school be more appropriate? E.g. if there are serious allegations/concerns being raised, social media/internet sites must not be used to name individuals and make abusive comments about those people. The school must be contacted to discuss any concerns you may have.
- Are such comments likely to cause emotional or reputational harm to individuals which can not be justified, particularly if school has not yet had a chance to investigate a complaint?
- The reputational impact that the posting of such material will have to the school; any detrimental harm that the school will suffer as a result of the posting and the impact that such a posting will have on pupils' learning.

Online Safety and Social Media Conduct

Although social networking sites appear to be the quickest and easiest way to express frustrations or concerns about school (and all those associated with it), it is not appropriate to do so.

Where a parent/carer has a concern about anyone associated with the school, this must be made through the appropriate channels by speaking to the class teacher, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors so it can be dealt with fairly, appropriately and effectively for all concerned.

At Stokes Wood we expect parents/carers to behave in a civilised and considerate nature online and will not tolerate any of the following online behaviour:

- Posting defamatory content about parents/carers, pupils, the school or its employees
- Posting allegations about parents/carers, pupils, the school or its employees
- Complaining about the school's values and systems on social media
- Posting content containing confidential information regarding the school or any members of its community, e.g. a complaint outcome
- Contacting school employees through social media, including requesting to 'follow' or 'friend' them, or sending them private messages
- Creating or joining private groups or chats that victimise or harass a member of staff, a pupil or groups of pupils or the school in general
- Posting images of any staff members or pupils without their prior consent

This list is non-exhaustive and is intended to provide examples only. Due to the ever-changing landscape of social media, inappropriate communications and material can be shared in, but not be limited to, forms such as comments, posts, videos or reels both in person and anonymously. The school retains the right to request that any damaging material is removed from social media websites.

Online Messaging

The school expects parents/carers to use messaging apps, such as WhatsApp, for purposes beneficial to themselves and the school. However, we will not accept any of the following behaviour:

- Sending abusive messages to fellow parents/carers
- Sending abusive messages about members of staff, parents/carers, pupils or the school
- Sharing confidential or sensitive information about members of staff, parents/carers, pupils or the school
- Bringing the school or its staff into disrepute
- Communicating on behalf of the school

The school appreciates the simplicity and ease of instant messaging; keeping in contact outside of school can benefit the school community by keeping it closer. The school does not, however, condone parents/carers sending messages about school as though a voice of authority.

Should any problems arise from contact over messaging apps, the school will act quickly by contacting parents/carers directly, to stop any issues continuing. The school can request a meeting with parents/carers if any misconduct, such as sending abusive messages or posting defamatory content, occurs online. The headteacher can, with the permission of the parent, view messages sent between members of the parental body to deal with problems quickly and effectively. The headteacher can request that 'group chats' are closed down should any problems continue between parents/carers or parental bodies.

Photography and Images

Parents/carers may be permitted to take photos of their children at certain school events, such as sports day or during a theatre production; however, parents/carers are only able to take photos of their own children and should only share photos of their own children on social media.

Parents/carers must not take photos of other children, staff members or volunteers, nor post them on social media without the consent of those within the images or, where applicable, their parents/carers. During events outside of school, such as dropping children off at the school gate, or whilst visiting the school, parents/carers must not take photos of any members of the school community, nor share these photos on social media.

Stokes Wood Primary School Twitter and Facebook

The school social media accounts are locked and protected. Only administrators and approved users can add posts. No one can comment on posts without going through the administrator. All content will be censored before posting. Parents/carers must sign a consent form (Home School Agreement HAS) before their child's image can be posted.

Responsibility

Parent/carers are responsible for supporting the school by monitoring their own use of social media and online messaging.

Parents/carers must also ensure that their children are not using social media/internet sites in an inappropriate manner and monitor their child's online activity regularly. The legal age for many social media sites is 13 years old but some have age limits of 16 – 18 years old. It is expected that parents/carers are aware of the legalities of social media and have a key role in making children aware of safe practice online.

Procedure the school will follow if inappropriate use continues:

In the event that any pupil or parent/carer of a child/ren at Stokes Wood Primary School is found to be posting libellous or defamatory comments on any form of social media, they will be reported to the appropriate authorities. All social network sites have clear rules about the content which can be posted on the site, and they provide robust mechanisms to report content or activity which breaches this. The school will also expect that any parent/carer removes such comments immediately and will require parents to attend a meeting with the Headteacher to discuss the breaking of the Home-School Agreement and the repercussions of such action.

If the parent refuses to comply with these procedures, and continues to use social networking sites in an inappropriate manner, the school will take the following action:

- Take legal advice and/or legal action where the information posted is defamatory in any way or if the circumstances warrant this.
- Set out the school's concerns to parents in writing, giving you a warning and requesting that the material in question is removed.
- Contact the police where the school feels it appropriate – for example, if it considers a crime (such as harassment) has been committed; or in cases where the posting has a racial element, is grossly obscene or is threatening violence.
- If the inappropriate comments have been made on a school forum, the school will take action to block or restrict that individual's access to that website or forum.
- Contact the host/provider of the social networking site to complain about the content of the site and request removal of the information.
- Take other legal action against the individual.

This policy will be reviewed annually, and the school will communicate any changes to all teachers and parents/carers. The next scheduled review date for this document is April 2025.