

Heartwood Church of England Academy Trust



Social Networking Policy

Policy Owner: Heartwood Heads
Version no: 1
Date first published: September 2015

Rationale:

At Warton Nethersoles's C E Primary we are fortunate to have very supportive parents who recognise that educating children is a process that involves a partnership between parents, class teachers and the school community. Together we recognise the importance of establishing good working relationships, and effective communication, so that we can provide the best education possible for our children.

For these reasons through our 'Open Door Policy' we continue to welcome and encourage you to participate fully in the life of our school, and to approach us directly with any concerns or issues you may have.

So we can continue to flourish, progress and achieve in an atmosphere of mutual understanding we would like to invite you to join us in setting a good example to our children in the use of social media.

Context:

Social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter are now widely used. This type of media allows people to communicate in ways that were not previously possible. However, such sites can be inappropriately used by some as a means of expressing negative or offensive views about schools and their staff. This document sets out this schools approach to parental use of such sites and sets out the procedures we will follow, and action we may take, when we consider that parents have used such platforms inappropriately. When we have referred to 'parent' in this document, we also include carers, relatives, or anyone associated with the school.

Objectives:

The purpose of this policy is to:

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

detriment of the school, its staff or its pupils, and anyone else associated with the school;

- Set out the action the School will consider taking if parents make inappropriate use of social networking sites.

All parents are invited to join staff in setting a good example for our children by:

- Demonstrating courtesy and respect for staff, other parents and pupils when comments are placed on social networking sites;
- Using appropriate language when discussing school;
- Addressing any issues or concerns regarding school, directly with the Head Teacher, a member of staff or a governor.

All parents are invited to join staff in setting a good example for our children by not:

- Using social network sites to make derogatory comments about pupils, staff, governors or other parents;
- Setting up forums which are used for complaints against the school;
- Attempting to start petitions against the school and encouraging other parents to join in;
- Posting photographs of other people's children or school staff on social network sites without their permission.

Inappropriate use of social networking sites by parents

Although social networking sites may appear to be the quickest and easiest way to express frustrations or concerns about the school (and those associated with it), it is rarely appropriate to do so. Other channels, such as a private and confidential discussion with the school, or using the school's formal complaints process are much better suited to this.

Parents should also ensure that their children are not using social networking /internet sites in an inappropriate manner. Parents are expected to monitor their children's online activity, including in relation to their use of social media. 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 school will always try to deal with concerns raised by parents in a professional and appropriate manner and understands that parents may not always realise when they have used social networking sites inappropriately. Therefore, as a first step, the school will usually discuss the matter with the parent to try and resolve the issue and to ask that the relevant information be removed from the social networking site in question. If the parent refuses to do this and continues to use social networking sites in a manner the school considers inappropriate, the school will consider taking the following action:

- Set out the school's concerns to you in writing, giving you a warning and requesting that the material in question is removed;
- Take legal advice and/or legal action where the information posted is defamatory in any way or if the circumstances warrant this;
- 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 considered to be obscene or is threatening violence;
- If the inappropriate comments have been made on a school website or online forum, the school may 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 ask for removal of the information;
- Take other legal action against the individual.