



Policy for dealing with the misuse of social media



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Coughton C of E Primary School Policy for dealing with the misuse of social media

1. Introduction

1.1 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 are used by some as a means of expressing negative or offensive views about schools and their staff.

2. The school's complaints policy

- 2.1 Social networking sites are not the forum in which parents should be raising issues about the school.
- 2.2 Coughton C of E Primary School encourages parents and other members of the school community to speak to school staff directly and all staff will accommodate parents as best they can to meet with them.
- 2.3 Should parents have concerns or complaints regarding school staff, procedure or process, then they should follow the school's complaints policy.
- 2.4 Often, it is appropriate for initial concerns to be raised with the class teacher, as concerns can usually be dealt with quickly and misunderstandings cleared up.
- 2.5 Should this not be possible or appropriate, then parents should speak with the Head of School.
- 2.6 The first stage of the formal complaints procedure is to complain to the Executive Headteacher; ideally in writing or through a meeting.
- 2.7 If parents are unhappy with the outcome of the Executive Headteacher's investigation and response, then the second stage is to complain to the Governing Body – at this stage a complaints form should be completed. The Complaints Policy is available on the School's website where the process is explained in more detail.

3. Responding to inappropriate posts by parents/carers

If an inappropriate comment/image/video is posted online about the school or its staff, the school's response will depend upon varying factors, such as the nature of the material posted; the type of site etc.

- 3.1 The school will make initial contact with the Warwickshire ICT Development Team, however, the school may also seek advice from its legal representatives should the circumstances warrant this.
- 3.2 In most cases, the school will first look to discuss the matter with the parent/carer and ask them to remove the material in question.
- 3.3 Following discussion with the parent/carer, should the posts either not be removed or continue, then the school will write to the parent/carer.
- 3.4 If steps 3.3 - 3.4 have not resolved the issue, the school will consider instructing its legal representatives to make contact with the parent/carer directly.

- 3.5 Where the material posted raises any safeguarding concerns, the school will follow the normal safeguarding process.
 - 3.6 In some cases, the school may wish to contact the website operator and ask them to remove the material or ask their legal representatives to do this on their behalf.
 - 3.7 At present, there is no single piece of legislation in the UK that is specifically designed to deal with inappropriate postings on social networking sites. However, there are several crimes that could be committed by inappropriate use of social media. In such circumstances, the school should consider reporting the matter to the Police. In addition, repeated incidents of behaviour amounting to harassment, or causing a person to fear that violence will be used against them, can amount to a criminal offence and would be reported to the Police.
 - 3.8 In some cases, even if a crime has not been committed the school may apply to court for a civil injunction against the person causing the harassment.
- NB. Section three is not an exhaustive list of actions available to the school and other legal avenues may be deemed appropriate. Each instance will be dealt with on a case by case basis.