

Helping Adults Who Work With Children To Use Mobile And Personal Technologies Safely

The purpose of this document is to:

- Help ensure that all adults (teachers, assistants, governors, visitors to the school and those in contact with pupils off site including potentially, outdoor pursuits centres, work experience placements etc.) can work confidently, safely and maintain the standards of the school and their profession.
- Help reduce the opportunity for misplaced or malicious allegations.
- Ensure that all adults have a clear understanding that illegal, inappropriate and unsafe behaviours are unacceptable and may result in disciplinary action.

This document could be included in the staff induction pack and used as part of wider staff development programme.

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Adapted from material by Kent County Council
The Independent newspaper (online edition)
Ictrambling.co.uk

It is understandable that colleagues may see new technologies and communication tools as opportunities to ‘connect’ with and support children more effectively.

Scenarios

- Teachers may take the opportunity to use a personal camera phone in class to record a magic moment when a pupil’s work demonstrates their learning.
- Teachers may send a comforting message to the child who is struggling to revise in a home with unsupportive parents and making progress against all the odds.
- Out of school, if a child sends an instant message saying they’re bored – it is understandable that some teachers may engage with them in an attempt to motivate them to complete assignments and go the extra mile to improve their attainment.
- A teacher who suggests to a child new to the area that they could use a social networking site to make friends may find themselves held responsible if the child is subsequently a victim of cyberbullying - or worse.

And if in doubt – Ask!

Mobile phones and other personal and portable devices

A school needs to have a clear statement on when a personal mobile device (e.g. phone) should be switched off.

Photographs and videos are a very effective way of recording pupils' achievements and learning activities. There are times when an adult may think it is appropriate to use personal equipment to take pictures or videos of pupils, an education visit for example or where an adult has a camera of a higher quality than those provided by the school.

The safest approach is to avoid the use of personal equipment and to use a school-provided item. One potential danger is an allegation that an adult has taken an inappropriate image with a personal camera and it would be more difficult for the adult to prove that this was not the case. With school equipment there is a perception that it is more likely that the image was primarily for school use.

A school should have guidelines on the management of images of children and include time frames for transfer and locations for storage. The following points may be helpful in developing your guidelines:

- **Ensure that permissions have been given and permission form has been signed before taking pictures of adults or children.**
- **Download images from camera/memory card/mobile device to the school secure shared area and store in a clearly labelled folder. This must be done within seven days.**
- **Delete original images on camera prior to camera being taken off site.**
- **Prior to using images in other media (e.g. email, online, paper based and other collateral) ensure permission given covers intended use.**
- **Equipment must not be available for further use until images have been transferred/deleted.**

Bluetooth

'Bluetooth is an open wireless protocol for exchanging data over short distances from fixed and mobile devices' (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bluetooth>) – or in more simple terms; you can share files, images, movies, appropriate and inappropriate content between Bluetooth enabled devices including mobile phones.

To protect adults it is advisable to ensure their Bluetooth is off or 'hidden' to prevent others from sending content or messages that may be inappropriate or illegal. Many young people and adults choose nicknames for their Bluetooth devices and it is important that adults who work with children do not choose a nickname that would be considered inappropriate. ('Sexy Blond' and 'Pornstar' are examples of names teachers have broadcast via Bluetooth in schools in the region)

Social networking

Social networking is second nature to many younger colleagues who have spent much of their youth texting and using instant messaging to chat, share information, files and experiences. Social network sites are not however simply a fad of youth - they have become essential tools for people of all ages and millions of people worldwide use them everyday.

Sites such as Bebo, Myspace and Facebook offer users the opportunities to post comments, images, videos, applications, links and even live chat. All of this seems innocent and harmless enough until we consider who is able to see the information and digital files we share.

'A survey released by Viadeo said that 62 per cent of British employers now check the Facebook, MySpace or Bebo pages of some applicants, and that a quarter had rejected candidates as a result. Reasons given by employers included concerns about "excess alcohol abuse", ethics and job "disrespect".'

Viadeo's UK country manager, Peter Cunningham, said the results should act as a wake-up call to anyone who has ever posted personal information online. "Millions of people are leaving personal information online, much of which is cached and remains available via search engines even after the author has removed the web page," he said. "When people who are not the original intended audience – such as potential employers – find this information, it can have a major impact on their decision making process." (<http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/gadgets-and-tech/news/facebook-can-ruin-your-life-and-so-can-myspace-bebo-780521.html>)

So, simple guidance for adults and young people is the same;

- **There are no privacy settings that truly protect your privacy**
- **Comments and images posted on social network sites are on the internet forever – even after you delete them from your account**
- **Things you say can be taken and shared with employers, colleagues, parents and children, out of context**

A response from some teachers might be 'I am entitled to a private life and outside school I can say and do as I like, can't I?'. However, the General Teaching Council Code of Conduct and Practice states:

'Uphold the law and maintain standards of behaviour both inside and outside school that are appropriate given their membership of an important and responsible profession' and it is worth noting that this has always been the case; teachers have always had to consider their public profile eg avoiding drinking in pubs where parents or pupils may frequent or refraining from mentioning their school if writing to the newspaper, participating in radio phone-ins or even guarding what they say about pupils and colleagues in public places.



Colleagues should always remember that information published to their site may be read by the Head, other staff, parents or pupils. To prevent any misunderstanding the following advice is offered:

Separate personal from professional

Decide from the start how you will use your account and the sort of information it will contain, if appropriate you could create two different accounts.

Protect your information

Make sure you understand the privacy settings and can restrict access to information you consider personal. (Be aware that this still does not guarantee privacy)

Think about your profile picture

Facebook can display your profile picture even when your information is set to private. It will also show some of your friends profile pictures.

Think about what you are publishing

Although you may have set strict privacy controls, the information could still be shared by one of your 'friends'. It is sensible to think that, once published, the information is no longer private.

Be professional

Do not discuss your school, colleagues, parents or pupils

Watch who comments

Although you might be careful with what you are posting, it is possible that you may receive inappropriate comments, pictures or videos from your contacts

Protect your image

Many sites now encourage you to name (tag) people that appear in uploaded photographs. These tags can be indexed and the original photographs displayed in search results. Even though you don't post pictures you may find that your friends do.

Talk to your friends and contacts

If it is a personal site, they should understand the need to keep your information private and not post inappropriate or potentially embarrassing comments, pictures or video on an open



site. If it is a professional site, they need to understand why you may not add them as friends or, if added, the types of posts or comments that are acceptable.

Pupils are not online friends It would be considered inappropriate to add pupils as friends on a personal site and the same could apply to parents. If you are looking to engage with the school community online then *consider setting up a school account that can be open and managed by several members of staff*

(http://www.ictrambling.co.uk/ramble/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=73:facebook-teachers&catid=34:news&Itemid=53)

School technology offsite – taking a computer home

There was a time a few years ago when laptops provided by school for teacher were often the only computer in the family home and we can understand how a teacher and parent may allow their children to use the computer for school work and even online personal shopping etc. Today, computers are far more common place and schools and teachers need to think carefully about the kinds of activity that are acceptable on school equipment in teachers' homes.

To help ensure that the teacher does not contravene school policy, it is easier to consider restricting the use of the device to:

Activity that has a direct benefit for the school, the pupils' learning and the teacher's professional development

Some schools' may take the view that the device can be used for some personal use eg online shopping, booking holidays, storing and manipulating family photos and videos, however in each case it is the governing body who are ultimately accountable for the use and contents of the computer.

Data security

Any device (laptop, portable media device) that contains personal about staff or pupils must have security measures in place. Security measures include password protection and encryption and must be appropriate for the associated risk.

Information security is an integral part of the Data Protection Act 1998. *'You must take all reasonable steps to ensure that any personal information that you are processing is securely stored.'*

Inappropriate material

There is a difference between 'inappropriate' and 'illegal' and this can be an area of confusion in some schools. Some online tabloid newspapers have images that could be described as 'soft porn' and for one school it may be considered inappropriate material whilst another may take a more liberal view on this if it could be used within an education contest – media studies for example. Schools must, therefore provide training, guidance and documentation to help ensure that no member of staff finds themselves facing disciplinary action as a result of accessing inappropriate content on school technology, in school or off site.

Illegal material

This includes indecent images of individuals under the age of 18. As 'indecent' is open to interpretation and ultimately will be decided by a jury it is very important that all colleagues think very carefully about any images they have of young people or extreme material on their devices.

Hate, harm, harassment

It is an offence to send indecent, offensive or threatening messages with the purpose of causing the recipient distress or anxiety.

Monitoring and maintaining technologies – guidance for technical support staff and network managers

- Staff with responsibility for managing filtering, network access and monitoring need to have received training and be adequately supervised by a member of SLT
- Students and staff need to be informed that network and Internet traffic will be monitored traced to the individual user.
- Staff that manage filtering systems or monitor ICT use will be supervised by senior management and work to clear procedures for reporting issues.
- Staff should understand that phone or online communications with pupils can occasionally lead to misunderstandings or even malicious accusations. Staff must take care always to maintain a professional relationship.

Managing filtering

The school should work in partnership with South Tyneside LA, Becta and Easynet to ensure that systems to protect pupils are reviewed and improved. If staff or students discover an unsuitable site, it must be reported to the E-Safety Officer or the Network Manager.

Senior staff will ensure that regular checks are made to ensure that the filtering methods selected are appropriate, effective and reasonable.

(http://www.kenttrustweb.org.uk/UserFiles/CW/File/Advisory_Service_ICT/KCN/Broadband_for_Schools/CoreEsafetyPolicy-Sec-14June08_2.pdf)

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