



## **Social Media Code of Conduct for Parents and Carers**

### **Purpose**

Peartree Spring Primary School understands the benefits of using social media; however, if misused, the school community can be negatively affected, such as damage to the school's reputation. This code of conduct sets out clear procedures for how we expect parents to conduct themselves on social media, when using messenger apps, and our school platforms, with regard to the school and its reputation. We ask that parents read this document, complete the declaration form and ensure that they always act in accordance with the stipulations detailed below.

### **Definitions and Scope**

Peartree Spring Primary School defines social media as 'any websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking'. Social networking sites and tools include, but are not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Snapchat, TikTok, LinkedIn, YouTube and Instagram. It also includes forums and discussion boards such as Google Groups, online encyclopaedias such as Wikipedia, and any other websites which allow individual users or organisations to use simple publishing tools. The school also includes review sites such as Trustpilot and Google Reviews in the scope of this policy.

### **Online Safety and Social Media Conduct**

The school expects parents and carers to behave in a civilised nature online and will not tolerate any of the following online behaviour:

- 🍷 Posting defamatory content about parents/carers, pupils, the school or its employees
- 🍷 Complaining about the school's values and methods on social media
- 🍷 Posting content containing confidential information regarding the school or any members of its community, e.g. the complaints process from beginning to end, including disclosing the outcome of the complaint
- 🍷 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 or the school in general
- 🍷 Posting images of any staff members or pupils without their prior consent

The school retains the right to request that any damaging material is removed from social media websites, either by the pupil, parent/carer or by the relevant social media company. If parents/carers wish to raise a complaint, the school has a Complaints Procedures in place.

Breaches of this code of conduct will be taken seriously by the school and could ultimately lead to expulsion of the pupil. In the event of illegal, defamatory, or discriminatory content, breaches could lead to prosecution. Parents/carers are instructed not to post anonymously or under an alias to evade the guidance given in this code of conduct

### **Online Communications and Messaging**

The school expects that parents/carers will use messaging apps, such as WhatsApp, and permitted school platforms for purposes beneficial to themselves and the school; however, will not accept any of the following behaviour:

- 🍷 Sending abusive messages to fellow parents/carers
- 🍷 Sending messages, abusive or otherwise, to members of staff. All communications to school staff must be sent via the permitted school platforms
- 🍷 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



The school appreciates the simplicity and ease of keeping in contact with staff, where necessary, through our school platforms. We are happy to help families with queries and concerns within working hours, and within the timescales outlined to families. The school does not, however, condone parents/carers sending frequent messages to staff on our school platforms. Parents/carers should understand that staff should not be contacted outside of working hours.

If parents/carers wish to talk to staff, parents/carers should arrange a meeting with the teacher by getting in contact with the teacher via the permitted school platforms, or by contacting the School Office.

Should any problems arise from contact over messaging apps, or via permitted school platforms, 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 school does not support communications between parents/carers and school staff beyond the permitted school platforms.

The Senior Leadership Team can, with the permission of the parent/carer, view messages sent between parents/carers to deal with problems quickly and effectively.

The Senior Leadership Team can request that 'group chats' are closed down should any problems continue between parents/carers or between parents/carers and the school.

### **Photography and Images**

Parents/carers and pupils must not take screenshots of live or recorded footage, and must not post these online.

Parents/carers must not take photos of other children, staff members, contractors, or volunteers. Any images or videos must not be posted on social media without the consent of those within the images or, where applicable, their parents/carers.

In the event of in-person events, parents/carers may be permitted to take photos of their own children. Any photographs or videos taken, containing other people's children, or members of school staff, contractors or volunteers must not be posted online without the permission of **all** present in the images or videos.

### **Responsibility of Parents and Carers**

Parents/carers are responsible for supporting the school by monitoring their own use of social media and online messaging. Parents/carers must adhere to the Social Media Code of Conduct for Parents and Carers at all times.

Examples of positive practice on social media for parents/carers are as follows:

- 🌱 Positive contributions to the school's social media, such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, are welcomed
- 🌱 Any concerns or issues about the school, its pupils or staff should be expressed directly to the school and not be voiced on social media
- 🌱 Parents/carers must obtain permission before posting pictures that contain other parents or their children, unless sharing or liking a post from the school's official social media account
- 🌱 If parents/carers become aware of inappropriate use of social media by their own or other people's children, they should contact the School so that the School can work with the parents/carers to educate young people on safe and appropriate behaviour
- 🌱 If parents/carers become aware of the inappropriate use of social media by other parents/carers or school staff, they should inform the school so that steps can be taken to remedy the situation

Parents/carers are responsible for ensuring they support the school by monitoring their children's use of social media and online messaging. Parents/carers must support their children in adhering to the school's Behaviour policy.



Examples of best practice in ensuring children and young people's safe and responsible behaviours when using social media and other online sites are as follows:

- Pupils use of social media must comply with the school's Safeguarding Policy, Behaviour Policy and E-safety Policy
- Pupils must not access any social media that is for adults only or if the pupil does not meet the minimum age requirement
- Anonymous sites must not be accessed as there is a high risk that inappropriate comments can be exchanged, causing distress or endangerment
- Bad, including offensive, explicit or abusive, language and inappropriate pictures must never be included in messages
- All messages should be positive and not include anything that could be upsetting or defamatory towards others or the school
- Pupils must take responsibility for keeping details of their accounts private, using full privacy settings and logging off properly and not allowing others to use their accounts
- Pupils must report anything offensive or upsetting that they see online to the appropriate bodies, either by using the "report abuse" tabs (or equivalent) or by speaking to their parents/carers or a member of staff
- It is a serious offence to use another person's account, or to create an account in another person's name without their consent

Pupils should not regard anything posted online as private and should remember that harassment, defamatory attitudes, racism, and homophobia are just some issues which could lead to prosecution

- An individual's "Digital Footprint" is becoming increasingly significant when it comes to job and university applications. If unfortunate decisions are made, it will be extremely difficult, perhaps impossible, to eliminate the evidence
- If pupils see inappropriate postings by other pupils, they must inform the school so that steps can be taken to avoid possible repercussions
- The Malicious Communications Act applies to social media interaction by pupils, staff and parents/carers of the school

### **Monitoring and Review**

The Headteacher alongside the Governing Body will review this code of conduct on an annual basis and will communicate any changes to all teachers and parents. All parents will be required to read this 'code of conduct' and the 'Acceptable use of the internet agreement for parents and carers'.