TRINITY SCHOOL
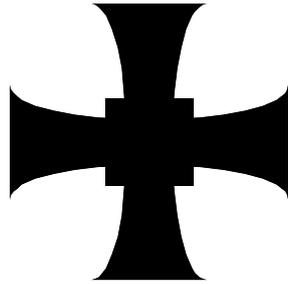
A CHURCH OF ENGLAND ACADEMY

POLICY ON PARENTAL USE OF SOCIAL NETWORKING AND INTERNET SITES

Overview

Social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter are now widely used, and these types of media allow people to communicate in ways that were not previously possible. Unfortunately, such sites can be used inappropriately by some as a means of expressing negative or offensive views about schools and their staff. This document sets out Trinity School's approach to parental use of such sites, and sets out the procedures that will be followed and action that may be taken when it is considered that parents have used such facilities inappropriately. Where there is a reference to a "parent" in this document, this also includes 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 students, 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 is considered that parents have inappropriately or unlawfully used social networking sites to the detriment of the school, staff, students or anyone else associated with the school.
- Set out the action the school will consider taking if parents make inappropriate use of social networking sites.

Appropriate use of social networking sites by parents

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

- Is the social networking site the appropriate channel to raise concerns, give this feedback or express these views?
- Would a private and confidential discussion with someone in the school be more appropriate? If there are serious allegations being made/concerns being raised, social media or internet sites should not be used to name individuals and make abusive comments. Please contact the school to discuss any concerns you may have.
- Are such comments likely to cause emotional or reputational harm which would not be justified, particularly if the school has not yet had a chance to investigate a complaint?
- The reputational impact that the posting of such material may have to the school, any detrimental harm that the school may suffer as a result of the posting and the impact that such a posting may have on students' learning.
- Trinity School will always work with parents to attempt to resolve issues. If parents are dissatisfied with our first response at any time, the Complaints Policy is available

on the school website, as are contact details for the Co-Headteachers and the Chair of Governors.

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 private and confidential discussion with the Co-Headteachers, or a member of the Governing Body, or using the school's formal complaints process are much better suited to this. The school considers the following examples to be inappropriate uses of social networking sites (this list is non-exhaustive and intended to provide examples only):

- Naming children or posting any comments about children who attend Trinity School.
- Making allegations about staff or anyone else connected with the school.
- Making any posts that could be deemed to be cyber-bullying.
- Making complaints about the school or staff at the school.
- Making defamatory statements about the school or any staff at the school.
- Posting negative or offensive comments about staff or any other individual connected to the school.
- Posting racist comments.
- Posting comments which threaten violence.

Parents should ensure that their children are not using social networking and other internet sites in an inappropriate manner. It is expected that parents/carers explain to their children what is acceptable to post online. Parents/carers are also expected to monitor their children's online activity, including in relation to their use of social media. Please note that most social networking sites require the user to be at least 13 years old, but some only allow access to those aged 13-18 with parental consent.

Procedure the school will follow if inappropriate use continues

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 it, 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:

- 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 the parent in writing, giving 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 considered to be grossly obscene, grossly offensive 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.