

CODE OF PRACTICE: SOCIAL NETWORK SITES

One of the many new technologies that has come to prominence over the last couple of years is the use of Social Network Sites. This is an evolving technology which has many benefits but there are also potential risks that staff should be aware of.

Aberdeenshire Education, Learning and Leisure has therefore produced the following code of practice.

General Principle

Contact on a social network site is no different from any other form of communication. As a member of staff you must:

- not discuss your own private and personal relationship with pupils.
- maintain an appropriate balance between formality and informality when dealing with pupils.
- take care to avoid becoming personally involved in pupils' personal affairs.
- be aware of the potential dangers of being 'alone' with a pupil in a private or isolated situation, avoiding circumstances which are or could be perceived to be of an inappropriate nature.

You should

- Where there is a need to contact a pupil for legitimate work related reasons utilise Glow. Interactions in Glow are recorded and users identities can be validated. The only proviso to this, is when using Glow Meet (Video Conferencing). Video Conferences should be conducted with regards to the same set of rules that govern face-to-face meetings in school.
- If you are newly entering a school environment, review the current content and access rights of any existing sites.
- Remember that your 'friends' on these sites may well live in the community in which you work. As such you may be teaching either their siblings, or their siblings friends.
- Keep your own social networking site private, so that only authorised users may view it.

You should NOT

- Accept current pupils or students in a school as 'Contacts' or 'Friends' on social networks or photo-sharing sites, including offering 'limited profiles' access. If a student requests access, this should be politely but firmly declined.

- Attempt to make contact with current pupils via their own social network websites.
- Create specific 'school networking sites' without prior authority from your head teacher. Even then, the use of Glow should be the first choice considered.

Content of Social Network Sites

Remember that any content put on social network sites or blogs may become known to a wider audience than it was initially intended for. Therefore:

- Get your facts straight. Libellous claims or comments on your site may make you, and potentially your employers, liable.
- Be respectful to your colleagues.
- Remember that you should write nothing that will damage the image of both your school and the authority as a whole.

If you require any more guidance please contact the SSDN project officer by email at rod.simond@aberdeenshire.gov.uk.