

What school will do

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 the matter 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 you in writing, giving you 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 prejudicial element, is considered to be grossly obscene 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 complaint about the content of the site and ask for removal of the information;
- Take other legal action against the individual.

Do you have a complaint?

Stage 1

Most concerns can be sorted out quickly by speaking with your child's class teacher or if you prefer the Headteacher.

*It can be difficult to remain calm when you feel you have a valid complaint but avoid allowing anger and frustration to affect your interaction with school staff. If you become angry, threatening or abusive you will be asked to leave the premises.

Stage 2

If you are still concerned following your meeting, you can make a formal complaint to the Headteacher. This should be done in writing in line with the school's complaints policy. The Headteacher will contact you to discuss the problem and you will usually be invited to a meeting to discuss this further. The Headteacher will then conduct a full investigation of the complaint and may interview any members of staff or pupils concerned. You will receive a written response to your complaint.

Stage 3

If you were not satisfied with the Headteachers investigation you may wish to make a formal complaint to the governing body. You should write to the Chair of Governors of the school. He or she will try to see if there is a way forward. If he or she is unable to resolve the matter, your complaint will then be heard by a committee of three governors called the Complaints Review Committee. They will have no prior knowledge of the case and will therefore be able to make a fresh, unbiased assessment. You will be invited to attend the committee meeting, accompanied by a friend or relative if you wish, and to put your side of the matter. The Headteacher will also attend to give his or her account. More information on how these meetings are conducted is contained in the school's complaints procedure.

EDUCATION & CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Parent & Carer Social Networking Guidance

This leaflet will offer guidance to parents & carers on the appropriate use of social media in relation to complaints about schools.



www.sirddinbych.gov.uk
www.denbighshire.gov.uk

What is social networking?

Social networking is a platform to build social networks or social relations among people who, share interests, activities, backgrounds or real-life connections. These online communications and social media include software, applications, e-mail and websites, which enable users to interact, create and exchange information online.

This content may include text, pictures or video and sometimes combinations of all three.

Increasingly these sites and services are accessed and updated through mobile devices rather than desktop or laptop computers.

This guidance aims to:

- Encourage social networking sites to be used in a beneficial and positive way by parents;
- Safeguard pupils, 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/carers;
- Set out the procedures the school will follow where it considers parents have inappropriately or unlawfully used social networking sites to the detriment of the school, it's staff or it's pupils, and 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 media

Social networking sites have potential to enhance the learning and achievement of pupils 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, it's staff, it's pupils, 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 private and confidential discussions with the school be more appropriate? E.g. if there are serious allegations being made/concerns being raised. Social media/internet sites should not be used to name individuals and make abusive comments about those people. Please contact the school to discuss any concerns you may have and follow the complaints policy;
- Are such comments likely to cause emotional or reputational harm to individuals 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.

Inappropriate use of social media

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 a private and confidential discussion with the school, or using the school's formal complaint 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):

- Making allegations about staff or pupils at the school;
- Making complaints about the school or school staff;
- Making defamatory statements about the school or staff at the school;
- Posting negative or offensive comments about specific pupils or school staff;
- Posting racist or homophobic comments;
- Posting comments which threaten violence.

Parents should also ensure that their children are not using social networking or internet sites in an inappropriate manner. It is expected that parents and carers explain to their children what is acceptable to post online. Parents and carers are also expected to monitor their children's online activity, including in relation to their use of social media.