Social Media

Code of Conduct for Parents

Approved by:	**Full Governing Board**	**Date: September 2024**
Next review due September 2026		

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1. Purpose and *scope*

At Hollybush Primary School, everything that we do centres on our core values which determine the expectations we set for our staff and pupils. In order for us to be able to teach the children to live these values, we need to ensure that they are modelled throughout all aspects of school life including interactions within our community. Therefore, we expect communication between parents and carers to demonstrate respect for each other, the school and our pupils.

It is difficult to insist that pupils behave respectfully towards one another if the adults they look to for guidance are failing to do so.

The School understands the benefits of using social media; however, if misused, the school community can be negatively affected, this can include individual pupils, groups or classes of pupils or indeed the reputation of the school.

Breaches of this code of conduct have the potential to cause damage because:

a. They can be detrimental to staff wellbeing and staff morale which can ultimately lead to staff absence and disruption for your children;

b. They can lead to staff, children and other parents feeling victimised, ostracised or even threatened;

c. They prevent the school from dealing with genuine concerns in a timely manner because staff find out about them second hand and after the event;

d. They take up hours of Senior Leaders' time which could be better spent in ensuring the very best quality teaching and learning for your children.

e. The school has a Complaints Procedure (which can be found at https://www.hollybush.herts.sch.uk/policies). This is the appropriate mechanism for parents to communicate and resolve any grievances they may wish to raise, not on social media or messaging apps.

This code of conduct sets out clear procedures for how we expect parents to conduct themselves on social media and when using messenger apps, with regard to the school and its reputation. We ask that parents read this document and ensure that they always act in accordance with the stipulations detailed below.

2. Legal Framework

This document has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Data Protection Act 2018
- UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- Online Safety Act 2023
- Malicious Communications Act 1988

This document operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Complaints Policy
- Social Media Policy
- Data Protection Policy

- Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour Policy

3. Online Safety and Social Media Conduct

When communicating with the school via official communication channels, or using private/independent channels to talk about the school, parents and carers should:

- ➢ Be respectful towards, and about, members of staff and the school at all times
- ➢ Be respectful of, and about, other parents/carers and other pupils and children
- ➢ Direct any complaints or concerns through the school's official channels, so they can be dealt with in line with the school's complaints procedure or other related policies.

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

- ➢ Posting defamatory or libellous content about other parents, pupils, the school or its employees
- ➢ Complain about the school, it's values or policies on social media
- ➢ Posting content containing confidential information regarding the school or any members of its community, e.g. a complaint outcome
- ➢ 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, a pupil or groups of pupils or the school in general
- ➢ Threatening behaviour, such as verbally intimidating staff, or using bad language
- ➢ Taking and Posting images or videos of any staff members or pupils without their prior consent

Parents/carers are required not to post anonymously or under an alias to evade the guidance given in this code of conduct.

This guidance cannot be evaded if parents/carers do not refer to the subject of posts by name.

Parents' social media usage will be in accordance with the school's Social Media Policy. The school retains the right to request that any damaging material is removed from social media websites.

Breaches of this code of conduct will be taken seriously by the school and dealt with in line with the ***visitor code of conduct***. In the event of illegal, defamatory, or discriminatory content, breaches could lead to prosecution.

4. Online messaging

The school appreciates the simplicity and ease of instant messaging; keeping in contact outside of school can benefit the school community by keeping it closer.

The school expects parents to use messaging apps, such as WhatsApp, for purposes beneficial to themselves and the school, and will not accept any of the following behaviour:

- ➢ Sending abusive messages to fellow parents
- ➢ Sending or posting abusive messages or comments about members of staff, parents, pupils or the school
- ➢ Sharing confidential or sensitive information about members of staff, parents, pupils or the school
- ➢ Bringing the school or its staff into disrepute
- ➢ Communicating on behalf of the school

School staff who are also parents should not be contacted via messaging apps, such as WhatsApp or text in relation to school matters. All queries should be submitted to the school via the appropriate communication channel during school hours.

The school's complaints procedure will be followed as normal if any members of Friends of Hollybush body conduct themselves inappropriately whilst using online messaging.

Should any problems arise from contact over messaging apps, the school will act quickly by contacting parents directly, to stop any issues continuing. The school can request a meeting with parents if any misconduct, such as sending abusive messages or posting defamatory content, occurs online. The headteacher can, with the permission of the parent, view messages sent between members of the parental body to deal with problems quickly and effectively. The headteacher can request that 'group chats' are closed down should any problems continue between parents or parent bodies.

5. Photos and images

Parents may be permitted to take photos of their children at certain school events, such as sports day or during a production; however, parents are only able to take photos of their own children, and should only share photos of their own children on social media.

Parents must not take photos of other children, staff members or volunteers, nor post them on social media without the consent of those within the images or, where applicable, their parents. During events outside of school, such as dropping children off at the school gate, or whilst visiting the school, parents must not take photos of any members of the school community, nor share these photos on social media.

6. Responsibility and compliance

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

Parents 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, Online Safety Policy and Safeguarding policy.

Parents should be aware of the age restrictions for social media and not allow their child to join any social networking sites if they are below the minimum age requirement.

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 pupils 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.

This is supported via the ***home school agreement*** and must be consented to in Arbor when each child joins the school.

7. Monitoring

The School will review this policy and the social media code of conduct on a bi-annual basis and will communicate any changes to all teachers and parents.

All parents/carers will be required to read this code of conduct and re-consent to the home school agreement on Arbor should any changes be made.