



Inappropriate use of Social Media by Parents and Carers of Schools within the Southern Cluster of Merthyr Tydfil

(Afon Taf, Abercanaid, Taf Bargoed, Edwardsville, Troedyrhiw and Ynysowen.)

The Schools in the Southern Valley are very proud and fortunate to have very dedicated and supportive school communities. The staff, governors, parents and carers of all Schools, all recognise that the education of our children is a partnership between us.

As a partnership we are all aware of the importance of good working relationships and all recognise the importance of these relationships to equip our children with the necessary skills for their education. For these reasons we will continue to welcome and encourage parents and carers to participate fully in the life of our school.

In the ethos of effective partnership working, we are committed to resolving any issues or difficulties, which may arise, in a constructive manner, through an open and positive dialogue. We fully understand that everyday misunderstandings can cause frustrations and can have a negative impact on our relationships and to prevent any escalation we urge parents and carers to deal with the matter as follows;

- Contact your child's teacher or the Headteacher, who will be available to meet with you and go through the issue and hopefully resolve it.
- Where issues remain unresolved, please follow the school's complaints procedure. This is available on the school website or a copy can be requested from the school office.

The use of social media to vent frustrations or concerns is not the answer and will never be tolerated or accepted in any way in any of our schools. This will only exacerbate the situation.

Issues of conduct with the use of Social Media/Whatsapp

Although social networking sites may appear to be the quickest and easiest way to express frustrations or concerns about the School/Staff, it is **never** appropriate to do so.

Our Schools 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/cyber-bullying;
- Making complaints about the School/staff at the School;
- Making defamatory statements about the School or staff at the School;
- Posting negative/offensive comments about specific pupils/staff at the School;
- Posting racist comments;
- Posting comments which threaten staff/children.

Procedure our Schools will follow for addressing inappropriate use of social networks

Our Schools 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, warning parents 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 Media

If any comments are deemed to be defamatory i.e. which are untrue, inaccurate and/or may damage the reputation of the person, the individual may be advised to take legal proceedings against the author of those comments which may result not only in the comments being taken off the social media sites but also a financial cost to the author to reimburse the individual for any injury to feelings.

Any comments which include racist, sexist, homophobic remarks, harassment or intimidation and threats of violence will be reported to the police for their investigation. Authors of such comments may find that criminal proceedings are then commenced against them.

We would like to remind you that you are legally responsible for what you do or say online and within a closed group such as Whatsap, and what you say openly can be accessed around the world in minutes and can be republished elsewhere. You will be expected take personal responsibility for anything that you say online.

It is not possible to know what information is being viewed, shared or archived, this will include information that is posted within a closed profile or group. There can be no reasonable expectation that posts will remain private and will not be passed on to other people, intentionally or otherwise. Material published online may have the potential to be available publicly, indefinitely.

A school should be a safe place where relationships between staff, parents and visitors demonstrates a mutual respect and recognition of shared responsibility for pupils' welfare and educational progress.

We want to work with our parents to ensure that the school is a safe place for all and if you do feel strongly enough about an incident at the school involving a member of staff then we encourage you to resolve by meeting the individual member of staff at the school or the Head Teacher for an open and constructive discussion to ensure the best resolution for all concerned.

Similarly, if any parents and carers become aware of any contentious posts relating to the school and/or staff we ask you to inform the school in confidence and the school will investigate the issue.

For and on behalf of the Governing Bodies of

Afon Taf High School

Abercanaid Primary School

Edwardsville Primary School

Taf Bargoed Federation

Troedyrhiw Primary School

Ynysowen Primary School