INDEPENDENT CHILDREN'S SCHOOL AND HOME

OWLSWICK

Owlswick School and Home

Social Media Policy for Young People

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Owlswick School and Home Social Media Policy for Young People

Introduction

The Internet provides a range of social media tools that allow users to interact with one another, for example from rediscovering friends on social networking sites such as *Facebook* to keeping up with other people's lives on *Twitter* and maintaining pages on Internet encyclopaedias such as *Wikipedia*.

While recognising the benefits of these media for new opportunities for communication, this policy set out the principles that young people who live and receive their education at Owlswick are expected to follow when using social media. The aim of the policy is to ensure that safeguarding of the individual young person at all times when social media is being used. Owlswick's aim is for young people to feel safe when using social media and know what action to take if they feel they are being bullied or feel they are being sexually exploited when on-line for example. Owlswick aims to educate all young people about the risks of revealing personal information on-line and using social media channels but also for individuals to enjoy using social media as a way to communicate with their friends and be part of networks/interest groups.

It is crucial that young people, parents and the public at large have confidence in Owlswick's decisions and services. The principles set out in this policy are designed to ensure that young people use social media responsibly and safely as well as keeping themselves safe.

Policy Scope

This policy applies to all of the young people who live and receive their education at Owlswick.

This policy covers personal use of social media as well as the use of social media for official Owlswick purposes, including any sites that may be hosted and maintained on behalf of Owlswick

This policy applies to personal webspace such as social networking sites, for example *Facebook*, *Whats App, Messenger, Instagram, Tumblr, Snap Chat*, blogs, vlogs, microblogs such as *Twitter*, chatrooms, forums, Podcasts, open access online encyclopaedias such as
W*ikipedia,* social bookmarking sites such as *del.icio.us* and content sharing sites such as *Flickr* and *YouTube* and decoy apps The Internet is a fast moving technology and it is impossible to cover all circumstances or emerging media the principles set out in this policy must be followed irrespective of the medium.

Related Policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following Owlswick and policies

- Owlswick School and Home Staff Handbook
- Owlswick School and Home Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Owlswick School and Home Internet safety policy
- Owlswick School and Home Anti-Bullying Policy
- Owlswick School and Home Missing Person's Policy
- Owlswick School and Home Tackling Extremism and Radicalisation Policy

Safeguarding and Child Protection

Owlswick is committed to ensuring that young people are safeguarded in all aspects of their lives and that individuals can expect to feel safe and be kept safe in their home and school environment.

Safeguarding and child protection covers and is related to a number of areas which relate to the risks of young people being for example:

- Sexually exploited and a victim of child sexual exploitation
- Becoming radicalised or involved in acts of extremism
- Going missing
- Becoming involved in gang culture or crime
- Becoming the victims of crime
- Being bullied
- Being victims of sexual violence and harassment between children

All of the above areas can be related to internet safety as the internet and social media are used to groom and exploit young people after gaining their confidence and adults or other young people seeking to form relationships.

All young people have a linked key worker from the care team who will be responsible for completing an internet safety agreement with them for the use of all technological devices within the house. Each young person also completes an internet safety agreement for using computer equipment and software programmes in school.

If an internet safety incident occurs regarding a young person, staff will follow a set procedure and report this incident (using the internet safety incident reporting process) to the Designated Child Protection Lead (DCPL). The DCPL who will make a decision about the immediate action needing to be taken and if the child protection policy needs to be evoked. In the absence of the DCPL, the incident would be reported to the senior manager from home or school for a decision about the action to be taken.

There are strict guidelines set out in the Owlswick internet safety policy regarding how staff monitor the use of the internet and social media by young people in order to ensure they are being safeguarded. Please refer to the Internet safety policy.

Owlswick has a software security system that enables Internet sites/programmes to be blocked by the moderators of the system who are the E-safety champions and senior managers. Owlswick's primary aim is to educate young people to feel and be safe when using the internet and social media as well as to enjoy exploring and being able to be creative. However there is a safeguarding requirement to ensure that certain sites are not available to individuals or groups if they search on-line or try to connect to a certain site which may show pornographic images for example. All the safeguarding and monitoring procedures and systems have a reference to the national requirements and regulations on Children's Homes to safeguard young people.

Owlswick safety systems

Owlswick has invested in the Connect Digital specialist software security system that

enables Internet sites/programmes to be blocked by the moderators of the system who are the senior managers. Senior managers receive a weekly report which provides data on the sites that have been accessed by an individual young people, indicates which blocked sites have attempted to be accessed, which websites have been most visited, games and apps visited and how long has been spent on the internet. These reports are then acted upon if they raise any issues of concern about personal safety as well as inappropriate searches, illegal material or viewing/contact activity.

The IT routers have been set to Google Safe Search which does not allow any embedded pictures or thumbnails in websites searched or accessed to appear as these are often inappropriate or may compromise personal safety in some way.

An additional safety system has been installed by managers which enable access to individual I.P addresses on lap tops and mobile phones. This means that devices can be blocked if they are being used to access websites or chatrooms for example that are not appropriate for the young person to view or participate in. Staff will have a conversation with the young person about what they are accessing and risk assess this in order to agree if a website can be further accessed for example. This is part of educating the young people about how to use the internet safely.

Young People Using Social Media - Guidance and Principles

When a young person/people is/are using social media the following principles will be applied and monitored by staff with the aim of educating and risk assessing young people:

-Each young person will have the privacy settings on their computer log-in account checked and set by a member of staff. The young person will be made aware of the privacy settings and how they can be used to keep them safe. They will also be advised that only people they want to see and comment on their spaces and not to open social media accounts to the general public. This will include ensuring that the location settings are switched off.

-A user name/password will be set by the young person and they will be made aware that these should not be shared with other people. They will be encouraged to keep passwords short, memorable and if possible to contain numbers and letters and treat them 'like their tooth brush i.e. not be shared'. The staff will check that that usernames do not give away personal information or enable the young person to be identified.

-The young person will be made aware of the importance of not putting any personal information on-line such as address, date of birth, full name, contact numbers, email addresses or age as this can be accessed and used by other people who may not be known to them. They will be advised that as soon as they are accessing social media or the internet then they are creating a digital footprint which will be with them when they leave Owlswick and in their adult life.

-Young people will be advised not to accept friend's requests from people they do not know and report to staff if there are any concerns they may have about these requests.

-Young people will be advised never to meet people they do not know from social media sites or chat rooms. They will be advised that people may not be who they say are and may be hiding under false identity. They will be advised that people can construct a false profile and pretend to be their friend as they want to be meet them in order to cause them some harm or abuse. They will be advised to talk to a member of staff or an adult if they are concerned about anyone they are talking to or who has suggested they meet. Staff will

explain the risks and dangers for young people in adults (and others) attempting to 'groom' them for example so they are aware of both the terminology and potential actions that are used by others when trying to carry out this type of activity. This will be done in a sensitive and informed way and may involve the skills and knowledge of external professional agencies if a young person has been assessed at being at risk in this area. This will also be the action taking by staff if a young person is assessed at being of risk at being radicalised by an individual or group for example.

-Staff will also regularly talk to the young people about their use of social media and how safe they need to keep themselves. Managers will receive a weekly confidential report of the sites being accessed within the home in order to inform these conversations as well as gaining knowledge about patterns of social media use. Any concerns will then be raised with the young person and the appropriate agencies notified as required.

-Owlswick has also ensured that young people become a friend of the Owlswick Facebook page if they want to access Facebook whilst on placement in order to monitor postings/photographs and content. Young people will be also advised of the risks of agreeing to private messaging with anyone they meet via a social media site.

-Young people will be advised to block any person that they feel may be bullying them through a social media site/Internet and report this to staff. Staff will then inform the appropriate monitoring agencies, and if necessary the Police, and take further action on behalf of the young person as required. Young people are aware of the term 'cyber bullying' and what this means in practice, they are also aware they must inform staff if they are worried or concerned about any contact that is being made by an unknown or known person.

-Young people will be advised that once information is published on a social media site then it will always be accessible to everyone even after it has been removed e.g. future employers. They will be also be advised to think about any photographs they post on line and how and where these are then accessible or used by other people in a manner which puts them at risk or could exploit them in any way.

- Owlswick operates a strict policy of young people not being able to set up social media accounts via Owlswick equipment until they are of the appropriate age and meet the legal age limits of social media sites. If a young person is found to have access to a social media site on their personal equipment then Owlswick will not allow the use of this on the premises and report any under-age account to the relevant social media site.

- Owlswick is constantly reviewing and developing its practice regarding social media and this policy will be subject to change and revision on a regular basis as well as the formal annual review.

Staff will ensure that young people are aware of the following terminology and the possible consequences of becoming involved in these through the use of social media and risk to their personal safety.

-Sexting
-Cyberbullying
-Revenge Porn
-Grooming or being groomed
-Radicalisation or extremism
-Posting images online
-Being bullied

-Being taken advantage of financially
-Having their privacy breached

Young people will also be made aware of the legalities regarding sexting and revenge porn. They will be informed and reminded that any images showing a young person under the age of 18 in an erotic or topless pose regardless of whether there is no sexual content is illegal and classified as 'an indecent image of a child'. They will be made aware that they may face criminal charges if they take part in any activity of this sort and will be reported to the Police. They will be made aware of the legal position regarding consent and what this means for young people aged under the age of 18.

Virtual Private Networks – VPN's

Staff are aware that young people may use VPN's as a route to access sites that are not age appropriate or may pose a risk their personal safety. VPN apps can be downloaded and put onto phones by people who may want to sexually exploit individuals for example. VPN's can be also be used to access the hidden internet also known as the 'dark net'. Staff will check the installations and use of VPN's as part of their E-safety checks.
Personal computers/Mobile devices
Owlswick reserves the right to make regular checks on young people's personal devices. Checks will be made if there are identified risks to a young person's wellbeing or there is a safeguarding concern raised about their use of social media which could mean they are putting themselves in an unsafe position.