

Social Media – Guidelines for Parents

Through social media it has never been easier to communicate and get your opinions shared. This has many positive uses but can at times cause upset or concern - particularly at times when a parent has a particular problem or personal axe to grind.

Opinions can be shared widely which can cause offence or discredit a person or school through social media – Facebook, text and email. This is a comparatively new phenomenon; the law has now caught up and is able to address the difficulties that can be created.

This year and last there have been some high profile examples of police taking action against people making defamatory remarks against individuals, politicians and celebrities.

Due to recent test cases North Yorkshire County Council has developed advice for parents in an attempt to prevent:

- Parents getting into trouble through making inflammatory or personal comments about a school or member of staff.
- Parents complaining the wrong way (Facebook) so no resolution with school is possible as the correct channels were not followed.
- The unnecessary spread of negativity and the incitement of other parents when often solutions are found the next day – good news is never shared so widely!

We do enjoy a very positive relationship with our parents; staff (as a whole team) do their very best to deal with any issues and listen to parents and pupils. Inevitably from time to time problems will occur and school would like to put them right as soon as possible.

The North Yorkshire Local Authority Social Media advice is provided below:

“Social Networking:

Parents of children in North Yorkshire schools are increasingly using social networking sites such as Facebook to talk to their friends. Sometimes parents have used these sites to criticise or make inappropriate comments about schools or even individual teachers. Making defamatory or offensive comments on the internet has exactly the same serious legal consequences as if they are made directly to anyone in person or appear in written form. Legal action could be taken against the person who has made the online comment.

Making comments that could be construed as threats of violence or are grossly offensive or indecent is a criminal offence which can lead to court action under the Malicious Communications Act 1988 and/or the Communications Act 2003.

If you have concerns about anything which happens in school please speak to your child's class teacher or the Headteacher who will do their best to resolve things. If you are still unhappy we have a complaints procedure which will ensure that your concerns are investigated thoroughly and appropriate action taken”

It is important that we resolve things the right way and continue to work in positive partnership. We all have a responsibility not to spread upset and stress within our community and to be positive and solution focussed. It would be great if good news could travel as far and as wide instead!

We have a complaints process to escalate concerns from:

Class teacher, Deputy Headteacher, Headteacher, to the Governors, then on to North Yorkshire Local Authority through to the Department for Education.

Please get in touch if necessary.