

# SOCIAL NETWORKING GUIDANCE

## GENERAL PRACTICE AND ADVICE

No member of school staff should be in contact with current, or former, students via social networking sites such as Facebook / Twitter in accordance with school safeguarding policies. This rule applies to all students within the school, not just students that the member of staff has direct contact with.

### FACEBOOK

School staff with Facebook profiles should ensure that they set the privacy levels on their accounts to the maximum i.e. only people on their friend's list should be able to view their pictures / private information, etc. This can be done by going to **Settings > Profile** and adjusting the parameters accordingly (this can include your visibility within searches, etc.).

School staff with distinctive surnames should be aware that it will be relatively easy for students to track them down on social networking sites and therefore they should take extra measures to ensure that they are not easily found on searches. This is less of a problem for staff with more common names, for example, due to the large number of people named John Smith it is difficult to trace a specific individual, etc.

Schools staff should note that although these measures will make it harder for students to find them on Facebook, a determined individual with knowledge of how the website works will eventually be able to trace a person down (given enough time).

### **Action to be taken if you are contacted by a student via Facebook**

There are two types of contact through Facebook:

- A message (inbox)
- An invitation to be added to a person's "friend list"

If a message from a student is received, the following action should be taken:

- Do not reply to the message. Replying to a message allows the recipient to view your profile in its entirety. This is also a way to circumvent the privacy settings on accounts.
- Inform the school's safeguarding lead at the earliest opportunity and advise them of the full details of the incident. The relevant Facebook communication should be made available to the member of staff to aid in any investigation.

If an invitation to a person's friend list is received, the following action should be taken:

- Immediately reject the invitation
- Inform the school's safeguarding lead at the earliest opportunity and advise them of the full details of the incident. The relevant Facebook communication should be made available to the member of staff to aid in any investigation.

*Please note that rejection of a "friend request" allows the sender to repeat the action; if this occurs the same procedure should be followed.*



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### TWITTER

School staff using Twitter should be particularly vigilant regarding their list of “followers” as unless the profile is set to private, anyone (including students and parents) could begin following the account. Staff should be aware that often people will use nicknames as their twitter handle and therefore it may not be immediately obvious if a student starts to follow them. As a result, staff should be careful with who is on their followers list and should carefully consider what their own twitter handle is, for example, @MrJones would be ill advised as students will often not be aware of a member of staff’s first name and will search for “Mr Jones” when trying to track members of staff down, etc.

To make your profile private, go to **Settings > Security and Privacy > Protect my Tweets**

You can also set up email alerts when you have a new follower by going to **Settings > Security and Privacy > Email Notifications > Email me when I’m followed by someone new**. This will allow you to monitor new followers, but will not prevent the person from viewing your profile and tweets. Only a private profile will prevent this.

There are three different means of contact via Twitter:

- A direct message (inbox)
- A tweet
- Following a user

If a direct message or tweet from a student is received, the following action should be taken:

- Do not reply to the message / tweet
- Block the user
- Inform the school’s safeguarding lead at the earliest opportunity and advise them of the full details of the incident. The relevant Twitter communication should be made available to the member of staff to aid in any investigation.

If a student attempts to follow you, the following action should be taken:

- Block the user
- Inform the school’s safeguarding lead at the earliest opportunity and advise them of the full details of the incident. The relevant Twitter details should be made available to the member of staff to aid in any investigation.

Each school will have their own individual policy for dealing with this kind of behaviour on social networks such as Facebook and Twitter, but the policy should incorporate members of staff speaking with the student concerned and reminding them of the school’s ICT acceptable use policy. The incident should be logged on the student’s file and parents should also be contacted.

#### **KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER:**

- **Keep your account privacy as high as possible**
- **Report any contact, or attempted contact, immediately to the school safeguarding lead**
- **Do not respond to any contact / request for contact other than to delete / block**
- **As a professional, you must remember that in addition to protecting yourself, you should not participate in anything via social media that would bring your employer into disrepute**
- **General rule - don’t post/share/tweet/re-tweet anything you would not be happy for your Nan (or your Head teacher) to see...**

