

Social Networking

a guide for school staff



Social networking sites are brilliant ways to stay in touch with friends and share photographs, comments or even play online applications. Most social network services are web based and provide means for users to interact over the internet. A social network service usually means an individual-centred service, however, they are also designed to enable advertisers to target you and entice you into buying goods and services based on the 'profile' information you reveal.

Staff should also be aware that allegations against people who work with young people are increasing. It is important therefore that we behave and communicate in ways that leave the absolute minimum to interpretation at all times. As professionals, we are both in a position of trust and are often seen as role models. It is easy for young people to be attracted to adults in such positions and to seek a close relationship. Be web savvy!

HINTS AND TIPS

- ◆ Social networking sites, such as Facebook, **have a range of privacy settings**. These are often setup to 'expose' your details to anyone. When 'open' anyone could find you through a search of the networking site or even through a Google search.

Fact
In practice anything posted on the internet will be there forever and is no longer in your control

So, it is important to change your settings to "Just Friends" so that your details, photographs etc., can only be seen by your invited friends.

- ◆ Have a neutral picture of yourself as your profile image. Don't post embarrassing material.
- ◆ You do not need to accept friendship requests. Reject or ignore unless you know the person or want to accept them. Be prepared that you may be bombarded with friendship requests or 'suggestions' from people you do not know.
- ◆ Choose your social networking friends carefully and ask about their privacy controls.
- ◆ Do not accept 'friendship requests' on social networking or messaging sites from students, pupils or young people (or their parents) that you work with. Remember ex-pupils may still have friends at your school.
- ◆ Exercise caution – for example in Facebook if you write on a friends 'wall' all their friends can see your comment – even if they are not your friend.

Remember
Keep all professional work completely separate from your private life

- ◆ There is a separate privacy setting for Facebook groups & networks, you might have your profile set to private, but not for groups & networks. If you join a group or network everyone in the group or network will be able to see your profile.

- ◆ If you have younger family members on your social networking group who are friends with your students or pupils be aware that posts that you write will be visible to them.

Remember
If you wouldn't do it in real life, don't do it online

- ◆ If you wish to set up a social networking site for a school project, create a new user profile for this. Do not use your own profile.

- ◆ If you or a friend are 'tagged' in an online photo album (Facebook, Flickr or similar) the whole photo album will be visible to their friends, your friends and anyone else tagged in the same album.

- ◆ You do not have to be friends with someone to be tagged in their photo album. If you are tagged in a photo you can remove the tag, but not the photo.

- ◆ Photo sharing web sites may not have privacy set as default.

- ◆ Your friends may take and post photos you are not happy about. You need to speak to them first, rather than contacting a web site. When over the age of 18, the web site will only look into issues that contravene their terms and conditions.

- ◆ Think about your internet use; adults are just as likely to get hooked on social networking, searching or games. Be aware of addictive behaviour!

- ◆ You will not be able to remove yourself completely from the Internet. English Electoral Roles are available and your personal information can easily be found by a stranger. In addition, websites can be archived for later use.

Remember
Once something is on the internet, even if you remove it, the chances are it has already been snapshotted by a 'web crawler' and will always be there. Current and future employers, parents and your pupils may see this

