



*"Learning for Tomorrow"*

# Ballymoney Model Controlled Integrated Primary

## Policy in Relation to Social Media

(Created February 2015)

### Introduction

The internet provides many opportunities for users to interact with one another through email, social networks, mobile phones, web-pages, etc., and while the benefits of such communication are recognised, this policy sets out the principles that Ballymoney Model Controlled Integrated Primary School staff are expected to follow when using social media.

Members of staff must maintain a clear distinction between their personal and professional lives. It is important that pupils, parents and the public have confidence in the school. The principles set out in this policy are designed to ensure that staff members use social media responsibly in order to safeguard the reputation of Ballymoney Model CIPS and its confidentiality in relation to pupils and staff.

The policy applies to Ballymoney Model CIPS's governing body, its teaching and non-teaching employees, and all students, volunteers and other individuals working with the school in a temporary or permanent capacity\*.

The policy covers both personal and official use of social media, including all sites hosted and maintained on behalf of the school.

The internet reflects constantly evolving technology and it is impossible to anticipate all circumstances of its use; however, the principles set out in this policy must be followed irrespective of the medium. The policy applies to personal web-space such as social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, MySpace), blogs, microblogs (e.g. Twitter), chatrooms, forums, podcasts, open access online encyclopaedias such as Wikipedia, social book-marking sites and content-sharing sites such as flicker and YouTube.

(\* Such persons are referred to as 'staff members' within this policy.)

## **Legal Context**

Ballymoney Model CIPS is committed to ensuring that all staff members pay due regard to confidentiality. All individuals working on behalf of the school are bound by a legal duty to protect the confidential information to which they have access. Disclosure of confidential information on social media is likely to be in breach of a number of laws and professional codes of conduct, including:

- the Human Rights Act 1998;
- Common law duty of confidentiality; and
- the Data Protection Act 1998.

Confidential information may be in written, numerical or graphic form, such as:

- person-identifiable information, e.g. pupil and employee records protected by the Data Protection Act 1998;
- information divulged in the expectation of confidentiality;
- school or other records containing sensitive information;
- commercially or politically sensitive information such as that relating to business proposals or current negotiations.

Staff members should also be aware that other laws relating to libel, defamation, harassment and copyright may apply to information posted on social media. Ballymoney Model CIPS could be held responsible for acts of its employees in the course of their employment. For example, staff members who harass co-workers online or who engage in cyber-bullying or discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, religion, age, disability, etc. or who defame a third party while at work, may render in the school liable to the injured party.

## **Principles**

Members of staff should be professional, respectful and responsible. They:

1. must be conscious at all times of the need to keep personal and professional lives separate. They should not put themselves in positions where there is a conflict between work for the school and personal interests;
2. must not engage in activities involving social media which might bring Ballymoney Model CIPS into disrepute.
3. must not represent personal views as those of Ballymoney Model CIPS on any social medium.
4. must not discuss on social media any personal information about pupils, Ballymoney Model CIPS staff or other professionals with whom they interact as part of their job.
5. must not use social media and the internet in any way to attack, insult, abuse or defame pupils, pupils' family members, colleagues, other professionals, other organisations or Ballymoney Model CIPS.
6. must be accurate, fair and transparent when creating or altering online sources of information on behalf Ballymoney Model CIPS.

### **School Use of Social Media**

- Staff members must always act in the best interests of children when creating, participating in or contributing content to social media sites.
- Staff members can only use official school sites for communicating with pupils or to enable pupils to communicate with one another.
- There must be a strong pedagogical or business reason for creating official school sites to communicate with pupils or others. Staff must not create sites for trivial reasons which could expose the school to unwelcome publicity or cause damage to the school's reputation.
- Any school websites created must not breach the terms and conditions of social media service providers, particularly with regard to minimum age requirements.

### **School Websites and Social Media Sites: Approval**

Social media sites and web-pages specific to Ballymoney Model CIPS can only be created by, or on behalf of, the school. Site administrators must be employed or authorised by the school. Approval for the creation of school sites, whether hosted by the school or hosted by a third party, must be obtained from the ICT Co-ordinator (Curriculum) and the Principal. Approval for participating, on behalf of Ballymoney Model CIPS, on sites created by third parties must be obtained from the ICT Co-ordinator (Curriculum) and the Principal. Content contributed to personal or third-party sites must be discussed with and approved by the ICT Co-ordinator (Curriculum) and the Principal; in particular, any use of the school logo. The site or its content may attract media attention. All media enquiries must be forwarded to the Principal immediately.

### **School Websites and Social Media Sites: Content**

Ballymoney Model CIPS hosted sites must have clear terms of use. Any third-party hosted sites used for work must have terms of use that conform to school standards of professional conduct and service. Staff members must not disclose information, make commitments or engage in activities on behalf of Ballymoney Model CIPS without authorisation from the ICT Co-ordinator (Curriculum) or the Principal. All information provided must be worthwhile and accurate; whatever is published on the site will reflect on the school's reputation.

The content and use of school web-spaces must remain within the law and show particular regard to child protection, privacy, data protection, libel, defamation, harassment and copyright laws.

Staff members must be sensitive to appropriate language and topics that others may find controversial or offensive.

All Ballymoney Model CIPS hosted sites must include the school logo to encourage confidence in the site. The logo should, where possible, link back to the relevant page on the school website.

Staff members participating in Ballymoney Model CIPS hosted websites must identify themselves and their positions within the school. They must never give out personal information such as home contact details or home email addresses. Personal opinion should not be expressed on official sites.

### **School Websites and Social Media Sites: Contributors and Moderators**

Careful consideration must be given to the level of engagement of contributors, for example whether users will be able to add their own text or comments or upload images. Sites created for and contributed to by pupils must have the strongest privacy settings to prevent breaches of confidentiality. Pupils and other participants must not be able to be identified through the site.

The content and postings in Ballymoney Model CIPS hosted sites must be moderated by the member of staff who sets up and/or maintains the site. He/she is accountable to the Principal.

For third-party-hosted sites such as social networking sites used for work purposes, the responsibility for protection and intervention lies with the host site itself; however, it is ultimately the responsibility of the staff member creating the site to plan and implement any additional intervention that may be necessary, for example in the case of content raising child safeguarding concerns or comments likely to cause offence.

Behaviour likely to cause extreme offence, for example discriminatory and/or abusive language, or content likely to put a young person or adult at risk will never be tolerated; rather, it will be removed from the site immediately. The PSNI and/or Education Authority's Child Protection Officer must be informed in the case of illegal content or behaviour.

School sites should discourage a system of "friends"; however if this is seen as a necessary element, such as within a cross-community project, individuals wishing to be "friends" must be checked carefully; their contributions must be monitored and any comments that are unacceptable must be removed.

Approval must be obtained from the ICT Co-ordinator (Curriculum) or Principal to make an external organisation a 'friend' of the site or to use the website for promoting 'friends'.

### **Personal Use of Social Media**

- Staff members must not identify themselves as employees of Ballymoney Model CIPS in their personal web-spaces. This is to prevent information on these sites from being linked with the school and to safeguard the privacy of staff members.
- Staff members must not have contact through any personal social medium with any Ballymoney Model CIPS pupil.
- Any information staff members obtain in the course of their employment must not be used for personal gain nor be passed on to others who may use it in such a way.
- Staff members must not have any contact with pupils' family members through personal social media if that contact is likely to constitute a conflict of interest or call their professionalism into question.

- Staff members must decline 'friend requests' from pupils in their personal social media accounts.
- On leaving Ballymoney Model CIPS's service, staff members must not contact Ballymoney Model CIPS's pupils by means of personal social media sites.
- Information staff members have access to as part of their employment, including that about pupils and their family members, colleagues or Education Authority staff must not be discussed on their personal web-spaces.
- Photographs, videos or any other image of pupils and their families or images depicting staff members in an official capacity must not be published on personal web-spaces.
- School email addresses and other official contact details must not be used for setting up personal social media accounts or for communication.
- Staff members must not edit open access online encyclopaedias such as Wikipedia in a personal capacity at work. (This is because the source of the correction will be recorded as the employer's IP address and the intervention will, therefore, appear as if it comes from the employer itself.)
- The Ballymoney Model CIPS logo must not be used or published on personal web-spaces.
- The use of school resources to access social media sites for personal reasons is not allowed between the school hours of 8:40am and 4.00pm except during break and lunchtime periods.
- Caution is advised when inviting work colleagues to be 'friends' in personal social networking sites. Social networking sites blur the line between work and personal lives and it may be difficult to maintain professional relationships.
- Staff members are strongly advised to ensure that they set the privacy levels of their personal sites as strictly as they can and to opt out of public listings on social networking sites to protect their own privacy. Staff members should keep their passwords confidential, change them often and be careful about what is posted online; it is not safe to reveal home addresses, telephone numbers and other personal information.

### **Monitoring the Use of the Internet**

Ballymoney Model CIPS and C2K may monitor the use of internet and email services without prior notification or authorisation from users. Users of Ballymoney Model/C2K email and internet services should have no expectation of privacy in relation to material they create, store, send or receive using the school's ICT system.

**Breaches of this Policy**

Any breach of this policy may lead to disciplinary action being taken against the staff member/s involved in line with Ballymoney Model CIPS's (and Education Authority's) Disciplinary Policy and Procedure. A breach of this policy leading to breaches of confidentiality, defamation or damage to the reputation of Ballymoney Model CIPS, or any illegal acts, or acts that render Ballymoney Model CIPS liable to third parties may result in disciplinary action or dismissal.

Contracted providers of services to Ballymoney Model CIPS must inform the relevant school officer immediately of any breaches of this policy so that appropriate action can be taken to protect confidential information and limit damage to the reputation of the school.

**Review**

This policy will be reviewed annually.