

# Halton Association of Primary Headteachers

## Social Media Code of Conduct for Parents/Carers



## **Contents:**

### Statement of intent

1. Legal framework
2. E-safety and social media conduct
3. Online messaging
4. Monitoring and review

### Appendices

- a) Acceptable Use of Social Media Letter to Parents/carers

## **Statement of intent**

**Halton Association of Primary Headteachers (HAPH)** understand the benefits of using social media. However, if misused it can be extremely detrimental to our young people, staff and school communities.

The purpose of this code of conduct is to provide clear guidelines on how we expect relevant parties (parents/carers) to conduct themselves on social media and when using messenger apps, such as WhatsApp, so as to avoid the negative impact misuse can have. The Social Media Code of Conduct for Parents/Carers sits alongside and compliments the social media expectations for both staff and pupils.

The Halton Association of Primary Headteachers are aware of their obligations under this code of conduct and ask that parents/carers support their child's school to ensure pupils, staff and other members of the school community are further protected.

## 1. Legal framework

1.1. This policy has due regard to statutory legislation, including, but not limited to, the following:

- Data Protection Act 2018
- Defamation Act 2013
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 (as amended)

## 2. E-safety and social media conduct

2.1. The **Halton Association of Primary Headteachers** expects parents/carers to behave in an appropriate manner online and will not tolerate any of the following behaviour online:

- Posting defamatory ‘statuses’ about fellow parents/carers, pupils, the school/college or its employees on social media or other sites
- Complaining about the school/college’s values and methods on social media or other sites

2.2. Every school has a **Complaints Procedures Policy** in place which provides the appropriate forum for parents/carers or any relevant party to express any concern or grievance that they may have regarding the conduct of the school/college or its staff. Such a policy is implemented to avoid parents/carers broadcasting any grievance online.

2.3. Parents/carers will be made aware of their responsibilities regarding their use of social networking and their conduct online.

2.4. Breaches of this code of conduct will be taken seriously by the Halton Association of primary Headteachers and, in the event of illegal, defamatory, or discriminatory content, breaches could lead to appropriate sanctions being taken by the school/college which shall not only include a temporary school/college ban for the offending party but also in more serious cases a criminal prosecution.

2.5. Parents/carers will not attempt to ‘friend’ or ‘follow’ any member of school/college staff on social media.

2.6. Parents/carers are expected not to post anonymously or under an alias to evade being identified and being in direct breach of the guidance as set out within this code of conduct.

2.7. **Halton Primary Schools** retain the right to request any damaging material to be removed immediately by the offending party from social media and any other websites where it has been posted/published.

## 3. Online messaging

3.1. Whilst the Halton Association of Primary Headteachers shall accept that parents/carers may wish to use messaging apps/email for the purpose of communicating to the school

in a positive and constructive manner, the school/college shall not under any circumstances accept any of the following behaviour:

- Sending abusive messages/emails to fellow parents/carers
- Sending abusive messages/emails about other pupils, members of staff, parents/carers or the school/college
- Sending abusive messages/emails to members of staff

3.2. The Halton Association of Primary Headteachers acknowledges that the use of instant messaging e.g. *WhatsApp* is a simple and easy way for parents/carers to communicate with other parties outside of school/college. This can benefit the school/college community by keeping it informed and updated provided that it is used in a positive manner. Should any problems or breach of this code of conduct arise from communication via messaging apps, the school/college shall act immediately by contacting parents/carers or the relevant party directly, to prevent any further issues continuing.

3.3. Halton Primary Schools and Colleges can request a meeting with parents/carers if any misconduct, such as sending abusive messages or posting defamatory statuses, occurs online.

3.4. The school's complaints procedure will be followed accordingly if any members of the parent teacher association or governing body cause any discrepancies through their conduct whilst using online messaging.

3.5. The Headteachers can, subject to the written consent of a parent involved, view messages sent between members of the parental body in order to deal with problems more quickly and effectively.

3.6. The Headteachers can request that 'group chats' are closed down should any problems continue between parents/carers or parental bodies.

#### **4. Monitoring and review**

4.1. The Halton Association of Primary Headteachers will review this code of conduct on an annual basis and will communicate any changes or amendments to the said code to all teachers, parents/carers and any other affected parties.

4.2. All parents/carers and child representatives shall be required to adhere to this code of conduct.

## **HALTON ASSOCIATION OF PRIMARY HEADTEACHERS**

Dear Parents/Carers,

### **RE: ACCEPTABLE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA LETTER TO PARENTS/CARERS**

All Halton Schools heavily invest in educating young people around e-safety, on-line reputation and cyberbullying. The **Halton Association of Primary Headteachers** understands the benefits of using social media; however, if misused it can be extremely detrimental to our young people, staff and school communities.

**Halton Association of Primary Headteachers** urges parents/carers to uphold the ‘**Social Media Code of Conduct**’ to support their child’s school in ensuring students, staff and other members of the school community are protected.

In order for us to set the best example possible to the young people of Halton, we urge parents/carers to uphold the same expectations we hold of our young people as part of our continued campaign to support the mental health and well-being of all.

The **Social Media Code of Conduct** expects that parents/carers will avoid:

- Sending abusive messages/emails to parents or teachers
- Sending abusive messages/emails about parents and teachers
- Posting defamatory ‘statuses’ about other parents, pupils, teachers or the school/college
- Using social media to complain or post any grievances about the school’s values and methods

The **Halton Association of Primary Headteachers** asks parents to review our code of conduct, which outlines what is deemed as inappropriate use of social media.

Should Halton Primary Schools be subject to any online abuse, we will take the appropriate action, which may include considering our legal options to deal with defamatory or libellous activity on social media.

Parents/carers will find the full Social Media Code of Conduct on their child’s school website.

All Halton Headteachers individually recognise that the support we receive from our parent/carers is extremely strong and we thank you in anticipation of this continuing.

Yours sincerely,

**Halton Association of Primary Headteachers**