**Safeguarding children**

**1.12.3 Social Networking**

**Policy statement for St Joseph’s Pre-school**

The Social Networking policy applies to:

* all staff members employed by St Joseph’s Preschool – both paid and voluntary; and
* all parents/carers/relatives of children who attend St Joseph’s Preschool.

St Joseph’s Pre-school realises that social media, professional network sites, rapid-fire communications, blog sites and personal websites are all useful technologies. Every individual has the opportunity to express and communicate online in many ways, and we do not wish to discourage online presence. However, we need to impose certain restrictions on an employee as to their profile content in relation to the pre-school and the pass of certain work related information and must comply with the Law with regard to copyright, plagiarism and the General Data Protection Regulations 2018 (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA).

The boundaries between the offline and online world are easily blurred; this can have potentially serious consequences for professionals.

The policy includes (but is not limited to) the following:

* Facebook
* Personal blogs
* Twitter
* Instagramme
* Personal web sites
* Snapchat

**Procedures**

* St Joseph’s Pre-school holds you the employee/parent/carer of children individually responsible for reading, knowing and complying with any Social Networking Terms of Service documents of the sites they use.
* Employees of the Pre-school must not list St Joseph’s Pre-school on any social networking site.
* Employees must not identify themselves and employees of St Joseph’s Pre-school. A social networker becomes, to some extent, a representative of their workplace, and everything he/she posts has the potential to reflect on the group and its image.

If a connection to the Pre-school has already been revealed by an employee, posts should contain disclaimers that make it clear that opinions expressed are solely those of the authors and do not represent the views of the group.

* Employees of St Joseph’s Pre-school must NOT identify themselves as working with children – this can lead to being a specific target of unscrupulous members of the web in order to gain access to children for paedophile purposes.
* All information regarding anything to do with the Pre-school is not to be discussed or referred to on any such sites, even in private messaging with restricted access between site members.
* There must not be any disclosures of personal information with regards to other members of the Pre-school staff, children using the Pre-school, parents and/or carers.
* Employees must not refer to children or their parents in any way. This includes coded references of people or incidents surrounding them. These can easily be worked out or misinterpreted with disastrous results. St Joseph’s Pre-school’s relationship with parents is considered to be an important one and valuable asset that can be irrevocably damaged through thoughtless comment.
* If you are concerned about something you see on social media, such as comments posted by a parent/carer, make sure you report it to the setting’s Designated Safeguarding Lead. If you are concerned about content posted by a colleague, then refer to the setting’s Safeguarding policy[[1]](#footnote-1) “managing allegations” section.

**Friendship/Tagging**

* The Pre-school’s employees must not have as or request parents of children currently attending the group or their known family members to be network friends. In this social setting it is easy to cross the line by inadvertently discussing the child even with the parent’s permission. All pre-school staff must comply with the GDPR 2018 and DPA 2018 in and out of work time.
* Staff members must not equally accept friendship requests from parents or their family members. Polite refusal is perhaps embarrassing initially but carefully chosen words stating that it is the Pre-school’s policy (without naming the group) that disallows it. Remember it is other people too who can see posts.

**Photographs**

* St Joseph’s Pre-school employees must never share or post photographs that show any child from the group in any form, even with parental consent. This is strictly not allowed even if the picture format has no connection to the Pre-school, ie. taken in a social aspect.
* The Use of Mobile Phones, Digital Photography and Recording Devices policies[[2]](#footnote-2) and procedure gives additional parameters for the taking of pictures.
* Staff are encouraged to speak with their friends and family about their online reputation; it is important that they understand what photos of staff can/cannot be posted on social media.

**Defamatory statements**

* Defamatory statements can lead to Lawsuits against the author of the statement and can be at the very least bring bad publicity to St Joseph’s Pre-school.

**Disciplinary action**

* If this policy is not adhered to, disciplinary procedures will be followed (refer to the disciplinary policy and procedure).

**St Joseph’s Pre-school Facebook page**

The Pre-school has two Facebook accounts.

1. An open Facebook page which is used to advertise the Pre-school. No information on what is happening day-to-day is included nor are photographs of the children uploaded. The video of a tour the setting is available on this page[[3]](#footnote-3).
2. A closed Facebook page which is only accessible to practitioners and parents/carers of those children who currently attend the setting. Photographs of the children and information on the day-to-day activities are regularly uploaded.

* Staff members will be asked to support or edit the Pre-school’s Facebook page.
* Only photographs of children with written permission from parents/carers will be used.
* The overall administration of the Pre-school’s Facebook page lies with the Lead Practitioner. She has responsibility to edit or remove posts that are distasteful.

**Support and Advice**

* If you are worried about a child or a colleague you can also contact the following helplines for support and advice:
  + Professionals Online Safety Helpline – Advice and support for professionals working with children with any online safety issues children in their care may face – 0344 381 4772 or [helpline@saferinternet.org.uk](mailto:helpline@saferinternet.org.uk)
  + NSPCC helpline – Advice and support for anyone who is worried about a child or needs information about child protection – 0808 800 5000
* National organisations which provide advice to professionals working with children include:
  + [Childnet](https://www.childnet.com/resources/social-networking-a-guide-for-teachers-and-professionals)
  + [London Grid for Learning](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-children-and-protecting-professionals-in-early-years-settings-online-safety-considerations/saferesources.lgfl.net)
  + NCA-CEOP [www.thinkuknow.co.uk](https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/) and [www.ceop.police.uk/Safety-Centre](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-children-and-protecting-professionals-in-early-years-settings-online-safety-considerations/www.ceop.police.uk/Safety-Centre)
  + [UK Safer Internet Centre](https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-and-resources/teachers-and-professionals/professional-reputation)

**Associated Policies**

* 1.2 Safeguarding Children and Child Protection
* 1.11.1 Use of Mobile Phones, Digital Photography and Recording Devices

**Further Guidance**

* UK Council for Internet Safety, Guidance “Safeguarding Children and Protecting Professionals in Early Years Settings: Online Safety Guidance for Practitioners” (published 4 February 2019)

**Legal Framework**

* General Data Protection Regulations 2018
* Data Protection Act 2018
* Human Rights Act (1998)

| **Version Number** | **Author** | **Purpose of change** | **Date** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1.0 | K Coupe | New policy | Sept 2014 |
| 2.0 | K Coupe  C Ajayi | To comply with GDPR 2018 & DPA 2018, version control and review. Updated following 2nd read by C Ajayi. | 7 Nov 2018 |
| 3.- | K Coupe | Reviewed. Updated with inclusion of further guidance and where to go for more support and advice | 20/11/2021  Cttee Mbr (TC) |
| 3.1 | K Coupe | Updated with regards to the use of Facebook by the setting in line with guidance from Early Years Gloucestershire | 18/01/2022 |

1. Policy 1.2 Safeguarding Children and Child Protection [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Policy 1.11 Use of Mobile Phones, Digital Photography and Recording Devices [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Written permissions obtained from parents/carers prior to video being produced. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)