# **Internet and Social Media Policy**

**Safeguarding and Welfare Requirements - Information and Records**

3.71. Providers must ensure that all staff understand the need to protect the privacy of the children in their care as well the legal requirements that exist to ensure that information relating to the child is handled in a way that ensures confidentiality. Parents and/or carers must be given access to all records about their child, provided that no relevant exemptions apply to their disclosure under the Data Protection Act

**Bishopthorpe Preschool Playgroup** recognises the numerous benefits and opportunities which an internet and social media presence offers. Staff and parents/carers are actively encouraged to find creative ways to use social media and the internet, in particular the Bishopthorpe Playgroup Facebook page. However, there are risks associated with this, especially around the issues of safeguarding, bullying and personal privacy. This policy aims to encourage the safe use of the internet and social media by the playgroup, its staff, parents/carers and children.

## **Statement of Intention**

This policy:

* Applies to all staff and to all online communications which directly or indirectly, represent the playgroup.
* Applies to such online communications posted at any time and from anywhere.
* Encourages the safe and responsible use of the internet and social media through training and education.
* Defines the monitoring of public internet and social media activity pertaining to the playgroup.

The playgroup respects privacy and understands that staff and the children may use social media forums in their private lives. However, personal communications likely to have a negative impact on professional standards and/or the playgroup’s reputation are within the scope of this policy.

Professional communications are those made through official channels, posted on a playgroup account or using the playgroup name. All professional communications are within the scope of this policy.

Personal communications are those made via a personal social media accounts. In all cases, where a personal account is used which associates itself with the playgroup or impacts on the playgroup, it must be made clear that the member of staff is not communicating on behalf of the playgroup with an appropriate disclaimer. Such personal communications are within the scope of this policy.

Personal communications which do not refer to or impact upon the playgroup are outside the scope of this policy.

## **Organisational control**

### **Roles & Responsibilities**

* **Playgroup Manager and Committee Chairperson**
  + Facilitating training and guidance on Social Media use.
  + Developing and implementing the Social Media policy
  + Taking a lead role in investigating any reported incidents.
  + Making an initial assessment when an incident is reported and involving appropriate staff and external agencies as required.
  + Receive completed applications for Social Media accounts
  + Approve account creation
* **Administrator** 
  + Create the account following Playgroup Manager and chairperson approval
  + Maintain account details securely
  + Be involved in monitoring and contributing to the account
  + Control the process for managing an account after a staff member with access has left the organisation (closing or transferring)
* **Staff**
  + Know the content of and ensure that any use of social media is carried out in line with this and other relevant policies
  + Attending appropriate training
  + Regularly monitoring, updating and managing content he/she has posted via playgroup accounts
  + Adding an appropriate disclaimer to personal accounts when naming the playgroup

### **Process for creating new accounts**

The playgroup community is encouraged to consider if a social media account will help them in their work, e.g. a playgroup Twitter account, or a Playgroup Facebook page. Anyone wishing to create such an account must present a considered case to the Playgroup Manager and committee chairperson which covers the following points:-

* The aim of the account
* The intended audience
* How the account will be promoted
* Who will run the account (at least two people members should be named to provide reasonable cover)
* Will the account be open or private/closed

Following consideration by the Playgroup Manager and committee chairperson an application will be approved or rejected. In all cases, the Playgroup Manager and committee chairperson must be satisfied that anyone running a social media account on behalf of the playgroup has read and understood this policy and received appropriate training. This also applies to anyone who is not directly employed by the playgroup, including volunteers or parents.

### **Monitoring**

Playgroup accounts must be monitored regularly and frequently, including during holidays where possible. Any comments, queries or complaints made through those accounts must be responded to on the next working day even if the response is only to acknowledge receipt. Regular monitoring and intervention is essential in case a situation arises where any inappropriate behaviour arises on a playgroup social media account.

### **Behaviour**

* The playgroup requires that all users using social media adhere to the standard of behaviour as set out in this policy and other relevant policies.
* Digital communications by staff must be professional and respectful at all times and in accordance with this policy. Staff will not use social media to infringe on the rights and privacy of others or make ill-considered comments or judgments about staff. Playgroup social media accounts must not be used for personal gain. Staff must ensure that confidentiality is maintained on social media even after they leave the employment of the playgroup.
* Users must declare who they are in social media posts or accounts. Anonymous posts are discouraged in relation to playgroup activity.
* If any party unconnected to the Playgroup e.g. a journalist, makes contact about posts made using social media staff must notify the Playgroup manager and committee chairperson before responding.
* Unacceptable conduct, (e.g. defamatory, discriminatory, offensive, harassing content or a breach of data protection, confidentiality, copyright) will be considered extremely seriously by the playgroup and will be reported as soon as possible to a relevant senior member of staff, and escalated where appropriate.
* The playgroup will take appropriate action in the event of breaches of the social media policy. Where conduct is found to be unacceptable, the playgroup will deal with the matter internally. Where conduct is considered illegal, the playgroup will report the matter to the police and other relevant external agencies, and may take action according to the disciplinary process.

### **Legal considerations**

* Users of social media should consider the copyright of the content they are sharing and, where necessary, should seek permission from the copyright holder before sharing.
* Users must ensure that their use of the internet or social media does not infringe upon relevant data protection laws, or breach confidentiality.

### **Handling abuse**

* When acting on behalf of the playgroup, handle offensive comments swiftly and with sensitivity.
* If a conversation or postings turn and become offensive or unacceptable, playgroup users should block, report or delete other users or their comments/posts and should inform the audience exactly why the action was taken
* If you feel that you or someone else is subject to abuse by colleagues through use of the internet or a social networking site, then this action must be reported using the agreed playgroup process.

### **Tone**

The tone of content published on the internet or social media should be appropriate to the audience, whilst retaining appropriate levels of professional standards. Key words to consider when composing messages are:

* Engaging
* Conversational
* Informative
* Friendly (on certain platforms, e.g. Facebook)

### **Use of images on Playgroup Social Media**

Playgroup use of images can be assumed to be acceptable, providing the following guidelines are strictly adhered to.

* Permission to use any photos or video recordings should be sought in line with the playgroup’s digital and video images policy. If anyone, for any reason, asks not to be filmed or photographed then their wishes should be respected.
* **Under no circumstances should staff share or upload pictures of the children online other than via playgroup owned social media accounts**
* Staff should exercise their professional judgement about whether an image is appropriate to share on playgroup social media accounts. The children should be appropriately dressed, not be subject to ridicule and must not be on any playgroup list of children whose images must not be published.
* If a member of staff inadvertently takes a compromising picture which could be misconstrued or misused, they must delete it immediately.

### **Personal use**

* **Staff**
  + Personal communications are those made via a personal social media accounts. In all cases, where a personal account is used which associates itself with the playgroup or impacts on the playgroup, it must be made clear that the member of staff is not communicating on behalf of the playgroup with an appropriate disclaimer. Such personal communications are within the scope of this policy.
  + Personal communications which do not refer to or impact upon the playgroup are outside the scope of this policy.
* **Children**
  + Staff must not follow or engage with current or prior children from the playgroup on any personal social media network account until they are 18 years or older. Any exceptions to this e.g. families already known socially to the staff member, must be approved by the Playgroup Manager.
  + The playgroup’s education programme should enable the children to be safe and responsible users of the internet and social media.
* **Parents/Carers**
  + If parents/carers have access to a playgroup learning platform where posting or commenting is enabled, parents/carers will be informed about acceptable use.
  + The playgroup has an active parent/carer education programme which supports the safe and positive use of social media. This includes information on the website.
  + Parents/Carers are encouraged to comment or post appropriately about the playgroup. In the event of any offensive or inappropriate comments being made, the playgroup will ask the parent/carer to remove the post and invite them to discuss the issues in person. If necessary, refer parents to the playgroup’s complaints procedures.

### **Monitoring posts about the playgroup**

* As part of active internet and social media engagement, it is considered good practice to pro-actively monitor the Internet for public postings about the playgroup.
* The playgroup should effectively respond to social media comments made by others according to a defined policy or process.

### **Managing playgroup internet access and social media accounts**

**Do**

* Ensure parental controls are set as provided by the playgroup internet provider to limit ALL ACCESS to inappropriate material to prevent accidental access by children when they are online at playgroup
* Check with the Playgroup manager and committee chairperson before publishing content that may have controversial implications for the playgroup
* Use a disclaimer when expressing personal views
* Make it clear who is posting content
* Use an appropriate and professional tone
* Be respectful to all parties
* Ensure you have permission to ‘share’ other peoples’ materials and acknowledge the author
* Express opinions but do so in a balanced and measured manner
* Think before responding to comments and, when in doubt, get a second opinion
* Seek advice and report any mistakes to the Playgroup manager or committee chairperson
* Do not tag people in images

**Don’t**

* Don’t make comments, post content or link to materials that will bring the playgroup into disrepute
* Don’t publish confidential or sensitive material
* Don’t breach copyright, data protection or other relevant legislation
* Consider the appropriateness of content for any audience of playgroup accounts, and don’t link to, embed or add potentially inappropriate content
* Don’t post derogatory, defamatory, offensive, harassing or discriminatory content
* Don’t use social media to air internal grievances

**Important guidance to consider on personal accounts:**

* “Nothing” on social media is truly private
* Social media can blur the lines between your professional and private life. Do not use the playgroup logo and/or branding on personal accounts
* Check your settings regularly and test your privacy
* Keep your personal information private
* Regularly review your connections and keep them to those you want to be connected to
* When posting online consider the audience and permanency of what you post
* If you want to criticise, do it politely.
* Consider what children or parents would say about you if they could see your images?
* Know how to report a problem

This Policy was adopted at a meeting of Bishopthorpe Preschool Playgroup

Held on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Signed on behalf of Bishopthorpe Preschool Playgroup \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Role of Signatory Chairperson

Date of next substantive review September 2022