



## **Social Networking**

### **Policy statement**

Cricklade Pre-School Playgroup recognizes that many employees, parents and carers use the internet for personal purposes and that they may participate in social networking on websites such as Facebook, MySpace, Twitter etc. In addition employees, parents and carers may set up personal weblogs or “blogs” on the internet.

Whilst everyone is free to use the internet for social networking, they must ensure that they do not breach the law or disclose Cricklade Pre-School Playgroup’s confidential information, breach copyright, defame the Pre-School, it’s children or parents or other employees; or disclose personal data or information about any individual that could breach the Data Protection Act 1998 and to keep completely confidential any information regarding the children, their families or staff members which is learned through pre-school.

The purpose of this policy is to outline the responsibilities of employees, parents and carers setting up personal websites and blogs and using social networking websites. This policy relates to material posted on public areas and those restricted to certain individuals.

### **Procedures**

As an Employee and for the protection of your professional reputation, it is expected that you comply with the following procedures:

- Do not create any social media friendships with parents of current children at Pre-School – this is so that the pre-school can be confident that the correct professional relationships are being maintained between staff and parents.
- Pre-school will make an exception to this rule if an employee has an existing relationship with a child’s parent(s) before that child starts at Pre-School. This rule no longer applies once a child has left Pre-School.
- Do not write or respond to anything deemed to be defamatory, obscene, proprietary, or rebellious. Exercise caution with regards to exaggeration, colourful language, guesswork, obscenity, copyrighted materials, legal conclusions and derogatory remarks or characterisations.
- Consider whether a particular posting puts your effectiveness as a childcare professional at risk.
- Refrain from identifying yourself as working for the pre-school.
- Take care not to allow interaction on these websites to damage working relationships between members of staff and parents of the pre-school.
- Post only what you want the world to see. Imagine that all work contacts are all able to visit the site. It is not like posting something on your web site or blog and then realizing that a story or photo should be taken down. On a social networking site, basically once you post something it may be available, even after it is removed from the site.
- Do not discuss children, parents or co-workers or publicly criticize the setting policies, activities or personnel.
- Do not conduct yourself in a way that is detrimental to the Pre-School.

- Remember that people classified as 'friends' have the ability to download and share your information with others.

Parents, Carers and Employees should also comply with the following procedures:

- Do not use the pre-schools website, internet systems, e-mail addresses or intranet for your own weblog.
- Do not link personal websites to the pre-school's website or disclose the name of the preschool on it or allow it to be identified by any details.
- Do not disclose any information that is confidential to the pre-school. The Pre-School's confidentiality policy provides guidance about what constitutes confidential information.
- If anyone chooses to write about their experience at Pre-School, even without identifying it, it may be possible to work out the pre-school's identity. Everyone should always be conscious of their duty to act in good faith and in the best interest of the pre-school under English Law.
- The pre-school will not tolerate criticisms in any web posting; even where they are true and not defamatory.  
These amount to a breach of the child's registration / employee's contract and could lead to the withdrawal of the child from pre-school or to action under the Pre-School's employment and staffing policy.  
The Pre-School's complaints policy aims to provide guidance to all those who work with or within the Pre-School, or someone with issues they wish to raise with pre-school.
- Do not discuss children's progress or activities on networking sites.

### **Cyber bullying**

Cricklade Pre-School Playgroup is committed to ensuring that all of its staff, parents and carers are treated with dignity and respect. Bullying and harassment of any kind will not be tolerated. Cyber bullying methods could include text messages, mobile phone calls, instant messenger services, circulating photos or video clips or by posting comments on websites blogs or chat rooms.

Employees, parents or carers who cyber-bully could face criminal prosecution.

### **Action**

If necessary, action will be taken against any employee, parent or carer who is found to have breached this policy.

### **Security Advice**

Employees, parents and carers should be aware that social networking websites are a public forum. Employees, parents or carers should not assume that their entries on any website will remain private. Visit your profiles security and privacy settings. At a minimum, childcare professionals should have all privacy settings set to 'Only friends'.