

Social media for teachers

Don't accept friend / follow requests from pupils

10 rules for teachers on social media

1. Change your display name - use your first and middle name, use a maiden name, spell your surname backwards, use a nickname, or use a contraction
 2. Change your profile picture to something unidentifiable, or if not, ensure the image is professional
 3. Check your privacy settings regularly
 4. Be careful about tagging other staff members in images or posts
 5. Don't share anything publicly that you wouldn't be just as happy showing your pupils
 6. Don't use social media sites in school hours
 7. Don't make comments about your job, your colleagues, your school or your pupils online - once it's out there, it's out there
 8. Don't associate yourself with your school on your profile (e.g. by setting it as your workplace, or by 'checking in' at a school event)
 9. Don't link your work email address to your social media accounts. Anyone who has this address (or your personal email address / mobile number) is able to find you using this information
 10. Consider uninstalling social media apps from your phone, The app recognises wi-fi connections and makes friend suggestions based on who else uses the same wi-fi connection (such as parents or pupils)
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What to do if...

A pupil adds you on social media

- In the first instance, ignore and delete the request. Block the pupil from viewing your profile
- Check your privacy settings again, and consider changing your display name or profile picture
- If the pupil asks you about the friend request in person, remind them of your school's social media policy (if you have one), or tell them that you're not allowed to accept friend requests from pupils and that if they persist, you'll have to notify senior leadership and/or their parents. If the pupil persists, take a screenshot of their request and any accompanying messages
- Notify your senior leadership team or headteacher about what is happening

A parent adds you on social media

- It is at your discretion, in accordance with your school's social media policy, whether to respond. Bear in mind that:
 - Responding to one parent's friend request or message might set an unwelcome precedent for both you and other teachers at the school
 - Pupils may then have indirect access through their parent's account to anything you post, share, comment on or are tagged in
- If you wish to decline the offer or ignore a message, consider drafting a stock response (either individually or as a school) to let the parent know why you're doing so

You're being harassed on social media, or somebody is spreading something offensive about you

- Do not retaliate or respond in anyway
- Save evidence of any abuse by taking screenshots and recording the time and date it occurred
- Report the material to Facebook or relevant social network and ask them to remove it
- If the perpetrator is a current school pupil or staff member, the school's own mediation and disciplinary procedures are usually sufficient to deal with online incidents
- If the perpetrator is a parent or other external adult, a senior member of staff should invite them to a meeting to address their concerns, address any reasonable complaints and/or request they remove the offending comments or material
- If the comments are racist, sexist, of a sexual nature or constitute a hate crime, you or someone from the school should consider contacting the police
- This KeyDoc is featured in our article 'Social media for teachers: cheat sheet'. To read the article, visit <https://schoolleaders.thekeysupport.com> and enter the article title in the search box

Check your Facebook privacy settings

- Change the visibility of your posts and stories to 'Friends', rather than 'Public'. Otherwise pupils and their families may be able to see your posts and pictures you've been tagged in, even if you haven't accepted a friend request or they're not on Facebook
- Don't forget to check your old posts and photos – see [Facebook's privacy support page](#) for step-by-step instructions on how to do this
- The public may still be able to see posts you've 'liked', even if your profile settings are private, because this depends on the privacy settings of the original poster
- Prevent search engines from indexing your profile so people can't search for you by name – see [Facebook's step-by-step instructions](#)
- Remember, some information is always public; your display name, profile picture, cover photo, user ID (in the URL for your profile), country, age range and gender
- Google your name to see what information about you is visible to the public

Check your Instagram privacy settings

- Change your profile visibility from the default 'Public' setting to 'Private'. Otherwise pupils and their families will be able to see your posts, reels, locations, and who you are following and are followed by. Go to the [Instagram Help Centre](#) for support with your privacy settings
- If a pupil or parent followed you before you changed your privacy settings, block them to prevent them seeing your posts
- Be careful about giving third-party apps or websites access to your Instagram account, and check app privileges in your phone to see if any apps currently have access. Sharing your information can put your account at risk and make you visible on search engines, even if you have set your account to 'Private'.
- Remember, some information is always public; your username, your bio and your profile picture
- Google your name to see what information about you is visible to the public

Check your Twitter privacy settings

- If you have a Twitter account specifically for or about teaching, make sure you don't include identifying information about yourself or your school. Use a nickname, for example 'Miss M'
- Change the visibility on your birth date to 'You follow each other' to prevent pupils and parents seeing this personal information. See Twitter's [profile visibility guidance](#) for more support
- Remember, your username, biography, location, website and profile picture are always public and can be seen by pupils and parents, even if they don't follow you and you have protected your tweets
- Protect your tweets by checking the box in the 'Audience and tagging' section of your privacy settings. This will mean only your approved followers can see your tweets
- Google your name to see what information about you is visible to the public