

# Complaints policy



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## 1. Aims

Our Trust, and its Academies, aim to meet its statutory obligations when responding to complaints from parents of pupils at the Academies, and others.

When responding to complaints, we aim to:

- › Be impartial and non-adversarial
- › Facilitate a full and fair investigation by an independent person or panel, where necessary
- › Address all the points at issue and provide an effective and prompt response
- › Respect complainants' desire for confidentiality
- › Treat complainants with respect and courtesy
- › Ensure that any decisions we make are lawful, rational, reasonable, fair and proportionate, in line with the principles of administrative law
- › Keep complainants informed of the progress of the complaints process
- › Consider how the complaint can feed into the improvement evaluation processes

We try to resolve concerns or complaints by informal means wherever possible. Where this is not possible, formal procedures will be followed.

The Trust and Academies will aim to give the complainant the opportunity to complete the complaints procedure in full.

To support this, we will ensure we publicise the existence of this policy and make it available on the Trust website with links from each Academy website.

Throughout the process, we will be sensitive to the needs of all parties involved, and make any reasonable adjustments needed to accommodate individuals.

## 2. Legislation and guidance

This document meets the requirements set out in part 7 of the schedule to [the Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), which states that we must have and make available a written procedure to deal with complaints from parents of pupils at the Academy/Trust.

It is also based on guidance published by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) on [creating a complaints procedure that complies with the above regulations](#), and refers to [good practice guidance on setting up complaints procedures](#) from the Department for Education (DfE). This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

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## 3. Definitions and scope

### 3.1 Definitions

The DfE guidance explains the difference between a concern and a complaint:

- › A **concern** is defined as “an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought”. The Academy/Trust will resolve concerns through day-to-day communication as far as possible
- › A **complaint** is defined as “an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action”

## 3.2 Scope

The Academy/Trust intends to resolve complaints informally where possible, at the earliest possible stage.

There may be occasions when complainants would like to raise their concerns formally. This policy outlines the procedure relating to handling such complaints.

This policy does **not** cover complaints procedures relating to:

- Admissions
- Statutory assessments of special educational needs (SEN)
- Safeguarding matters
- Exclusion
- Whistle-blowing
- Staff grievances ➤

Staff discipline

Please see our separate policies for procedures relating to these types of complaint.

Arrangements for handling complaints from parents of children with special educational needs (SEN) about the Academies' support are within the scope of this policy. Such complaints should first be made to the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO); they will then be referred to this complaints policy. Our SEN policy includes information about the rights of parents of pupils with disabilities who believe that our Academy/ Trust has discriminated against their child.

Complaints about services provided by other providers who use Trust and Academy premises or facilities should be directed to the provider concerned.

## 4. Roles and responsibilities

### 4.1 The complainant

The complainant will get a more effective and timely response to their complaint if they:

- Follow these procedures
- Co-operate throughout the process, and respond to deadlines and communication promptly
- Treat all those involved with respect
- Not publish details about the complaint on social media

### 4.2 The investigator

An individual will be appointed to look into the complaint, and establish the facts. They will:

- Interview all relevant parties, keeping notes
- Consider records and any written evidence and keep these securely
- Prepare a comprehensive report to the Principal, or in the case of the Trust, the Chief Executive which includes the facts and potential solutions
- If the report is approved, will write to the complainant setting out the response to the complaint and advising the route for a review if the complainant is unhappy with the outcome

### 4.3 Clerk to the Academy Council

The clerk will:

- › Be the contact point for the complainant and the review committee if the complainant is unhappy with the outcome of the complaint, including circulating the relevant papers and evidence before the review committee meetings
- › Arrange the complaints review meeting
- › Record and circulate the minutes and outcome of the meeting

#### **4.4 Committee chair**

The committee chair will:

- › Chair the meeting, ensuring that everyone is treated with respect throughout
- › Make sure all parties see the relevant information, understand the purpose of the committee, and are allowed to present their case

## **5. Principles for investigation**

When investigating a complaint, we will try to clarify:

- › What has happened
- › Who was involved
- › What the complainant feels would put things right

### **5.1 Time scales**

The complainant must raise the complaint within 3 months of the incident. If the complaint is about a series of related incidents, they must raise the complaint within 3 months of the last incident.

We will consider exceptions to this time frame in circumstances where there were valid reasons for not making a complaint at that time and the complaint can still be investigated in a fair manner for all involved.

When complaints are made out of term time, we will consider them to have been received on the next school day.

If at any point we cannot meet the time scales we have set out in this policy, we will:

- › Set new time limits with the complainant
- › Send the complainant details of the new deadline and explain the delay

## **6. Stages of complaint (not complaints against the Principal or governors)**

### **6.1 Stage 1: informal**

The Academy will take informal concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve the matter quickly. It may be the case that the provision or clarification of information will resolve the issue.

The complainant should raise the complaint as soon as possible with the relevant member of staff or the Principal, either in person or by letter, telephone or email. If the complainant is unclear who to contact or how to contact them, they should contact the Academy office.

The Academy will acknowledge informal complaints within five school days, and investigate and provide a response within twenty school days.

The informal stage will involve a meeting between the complainant and the staff member and Principal or appropriate member of the Senior Leadership Team.

If the complaint is not resolved informally, it will be escalated to a formal complaint.

## 6.2 Stage 2: formal

The formal stage involves the complainant putting the complaint to the Principal and/or the subject of the complaint:

- In a letter or email
- Through a third party acting on their behalf in writing by letter or email

The complainant should provide details such as relevant dates, times and the names of witnesses of events, alongside copies of any relevant documents. The complainant should also state what they feel would resolve the complaint.

If complainants need assistance raising a formal complaint, they can contact the Academy office as appropriate.

The Principal (or other person appointed by the Principal for this purpose) will then conduct their own investigation. The written conclusion of this investigation will be sent to the complainant within twenty school days.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the response and wishes to proceed to the next stage of this procedure, they should inform the clerk to the governing board in writing within ten school days.

## 6.3 Stage 3: review panel

Complaints will be escalated to the panel hearing stage if the complainant is not satisfied with the response to the complaint at the second, formal, stage.

The panel will be appointed by or on behalf of the proprietor and must consist of at least 3 people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. At least 1 panel member must be independent of the management and running of the Academy/Trust. The panel cannot be made up solely of governing board members, as they are not independent of the management and running of the Academy/Trust. The panel will have access to the existing record of the complaint's progress (see section 10).

The complainant must have reasonable notice of the date of the review panel; however, the review panel reserves the right to convene at their convenience rather than that of the complainant. At the review panel meeting, the complainant and representatives from the Academy, as appropriate, will be present. Each will have an opportunity to set out written or oral submissions prior to the meeting.

The complainant must be allowed to attend the panel hearing and be accompanied if they wish.

At the meeting, each individual will have the opportunity to give statements and present their evidence, and witnesses will be called, as appropriate, to present their evidence.

The panel, the complainant and the Academy representative(s) will be given the chance to ask and reply to questions. Once the complainant and Academy representative(s) have presented their cases, they will be asked to leave and evidence will then be considered.

The panel will then put together its findings and recommendations from the case. The panel will also provide copies of the minutes of the hearing and the findings and recommendations to the complainant and, where relevant, the individual who is the subject of the complaint, and make a copy available for inspection by the Trust and Principal.

The Academy Council will inform those involved of the decision in writing within thirty school days.

## 7. **Complaints against the Principal, a member of the central Trust, a governor or the Academy Council or member of the Trust Board or the Trust Board**

### 7.1 **Stage 1: informal**

Complaints made against a Principal or a member of the central Trust should be directed to the Trust's Operations Officer in the first instance, or if against the Trust's Operations Officer to the Chief Executive.

Complaints made against any member of the Academy Council or the Trust Board should be directed to the Chief Executive Officer in the first instance. In instances of complaints regarding the Trust Board the Chief Executive Officer will liaise with a nominated Trust Member regarding the process and outcomes.

Complaints regarding the Executive Leadership team excluding the Chief Executive Officer, should be directed to the Chief Executive. Those regarding the Chief Executive should be directed to the Chair of the Board.

If the complaint is about a Principal, a central Trust member of staff or one member of the Academy Council/Board (including the chair or vice-chair), a suitably-skilled and impartial third party will carry out the steps at stage 1 (set out in section 6 above).

## **7.2 Stage 2: formal**

If the complaint is jointly about the chair and vice-chair, the entire Academy Council/Trust Board or the majority of the Academy Council/Trust Board, this should again be directed to the Chief Executive Officer who will arrange for an independent investigator to carry out the steps in stage 2 (set out in section 6 above). They will be appointed by the Trust, and will write a formal response at the end of their investigation. The same process will apply as above with the involvement of a nominated Trust Member if the complaint is regarding the Trust Board.

If the complaint is regarding a Principal or member of the central Trust, the complaint should be directed to the Trust's Operations Officer who will appoint an Investigating Officer. This may be an external third party. The investigating officer will carry out the steps in Stage 2 (set out in section 6 above). They will write a formal response at the end of the investigation.

For complaints regarding the Trust's Executive Leadership Team should be directed as above. The same investigation process with an external third party will be used as above.

## **7.3 Stage 3: review panel (appeal)**

If the complaint is jointly about the chair and vice-chair, the entire Academy Council/Trust Board or the majority of the Academy Council/Trust Board, a committee of independent governors will hear the complaint or in the case of the Trust Board, the Members. They will be sourced from local Academies, the local authority or other Multi-Academy Trusts and will carry out the steps at stage 3 (set out in section 6 above).

## **8. Referring complaints on completion of the Trust's procedure**

If the complainant is unsatisfied with the outcome of the complaints procedure, they can refer their complaint to the ESFA. The ESFA will check whether the complaint has been dealt with properly. The ESFA will not overturn a decision about a complaint. However, it will look into:

- Whether there was undue delay, or the Trust/Academy did not comply with its own complaints procedure
- Whether there was a breach of the funding agreement with the secretary of state
- Whether there was a failure to comply with any other legal obligation

If the complaint was not dealt with properly, the Trust/Academy will be asked to re-investigate the complaint. If the complaints procedure is found to not meet regulations, the Trust will be asked to correct its procedure accordingly.

For more information or to refer a complaint, see the following webpage:

<https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school>

We will include this information in the outcome letter to complainants.

## **9. Persistent complaints**

### **9.1 Unreasonably persistent complaints**

Most complaints raised will be valid, and therefore we will treat them seriously. However, a complaint may become unreasonable if the person:

- Has made the same complaint before, and it's already been resolved by following the school's complaints procedure
- Makes a complaint that is obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, defamatory or repetitive
- Knowingly provides false information
- Insists on pursuing a complaint that is unfounded, or out of scope of the complaints procedure
- Pursues a valid complaint, but in an unreasonable manner e.g. refuses to articulate the complaint, refuses to co-operate with this complaints procedure, or insists that the complaint is dealt with in ways that are incompatible with this procedure and the time frames it sets out
- Changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation goes on
- Makes a complaint designed to cause disruption, annoyance or excessive demands on school time
- Seeks unrealistic outcomes, or a solution that lacks any serious purpose or value

### **Steps we will take**

We will take every reasonable step to address the complainant's concerns, and give them a clear statement of our position and their options. We will maintain our role as an objective arbiter throughout the process, including when we meet with individuals. We will follow our complaints procedure as normal (as outlined above) wherever possible.

If the complainant continues to contact the school in a disruptive way, we may put communications strategies in place. We may:

- Give the complainant a single point of contact via an email address
- Limit the number of times the complainant can make contact, such as a fixed number per term
- Ask the complainant to engage a third party to act on their behalf, such as [Citizens Advice](#)
- Put any other strategy in place as necessary

### **Stopping responding**

We may stop responding to the complainant when all of these factors are met:

- We believe we have taken all reasonable steps to help address their concerns
- We have provided a clear statement of our position and their options
- The complainant contacts us repeatedly, and we believe their intention is to cause disruption or inconvenience

Where we stop responding, we will inform the individual that we intend to do so. We will also explain that we will still consider any new complaints they make.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from our school site.

## **9.2 Duplicate complaints**

If we have resolved a complaint under this procedure and receive a duplicate complaint on the same subject from a partner, family member or other individual, we will assess whether there are aspects that we hadn't previously considered, or any new information we need to take into account.

If we are satisfied that there are no new aspects, we will:

- Tell the new complainant that we have already investigated and responded to this issue, and the local process is complete
- Direct them to the DfE if they are dissatisfied with our original handling of the complaint

If there are new aspects, we will follow this procedure again.

### 9.3 Complaint campaigns

Where the school receives a large volume of complaints about the same topic or subject, especially if these come from complainants unconnected with the school, the school may respond to these complaints by:

- Publishing a single response on the school website
- Sending a template response to all of the complainants

If complainants are not satisfied with the school's response, or wish to pursue the complaint further, the normal procedures will apply.

## 10. Record keeping

The Academy/Trust will record the progress of all complaints, including information about actions taken at all stages, the stage at which the complaint was resolved, and the final outcome on a register at Academy or Trust level. The records will also include copies of letters and emails, and notes relating to meetings and phone calls.

This material will be treated as confidential and held locally at Academy level or if investigated by the Trust centrally, and will be viewed only by those involved in investigating the complaint or on the review panel. The central Trust will have access to complaints documentation made against Academies within the Trust.

This is except where the secretary of state (or someone acting on their behalf) or the complainant requests access to records of a complaint through a freedom of information (FOI) request or through a subject access request under the terms of the Data Protection Act, or where the material must be made available during an Academy/Trust inspection.

Records of complaints will be kept securely, only for as long as necessary and in line with data protection law, our privacy notices and the Trust's Data Protection Policy.

The details of the complaint, including the names of individuals involved, will not be shared with the whole governing board in case a review panel needs to be organised at a later point.

Where the governing board is aware of the substance of the complaint before the review panel stage, the Academy/Trust will (where reasonably practicable) arrange for an independent panel to hear the complaint.

Complainants also have the right to request an independent panel if they believe there is likely to be bias in the proceedings. The decision to approve this request is made by the governing board, who will not unreasonably withhold consent.

## 11. Social Media

Dealing with Complaints against Schools and Settings by Parents or Carers on Social Networking Sites can be found in Appendix A of this policy.

## 12. Learning lessons

The Academy Council or Trust Board will review any underlying issues raised by complaints with the Principal/CEO, where appropriate, and respecting confidentiality, to determine whether there are any improvements that the Academy/Trust can make to its procedures or practice to help prevent similar events in the future.



### **13. Monitoring arrangements**

The Academy Council and Trust Board will monitor the effectiveness of the complaints procedure in ensuring that complaints are handled properly. The Academy Council and Trust Board will track the number and nature of complaints, and review underlying issues as stated in section 11.

The complaints records are logged and managed by Principal's designated support, and at the central Trust by the Trust's Operations Officer.

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years or when a significant change occurs. At each review, the policy will be approved by the Audit Committee.

## **14. Links with other policies**

Policies dealing with other forms of complaints include:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy and procedures
- Admissions policy
- Exclusions policy
- Staff grievance procedures
- Staff disciplinary procedures
- SEN policy and information report
- Privacy notices
- Abuse and Violence Against Staff
- Allegations of Abuse by Staff

## Appendix A

### Guidance for Dealing with Complaints against Schools and Settings by Parents or Carers on Social Networking Sites

## 1. Introduction

The increasing use of social media has had both positive and negative effects on schools and their reputation in the local community. Many use social media such as Facebook and twitter positively for communication and promotional purposes. Parental feedback is now encouraged by means such as Parent View for Ofsted or other packages.

However, we have had several instances where parents have bypassed the complaints procedures and taken to social networking sites to criticise and, in some, cases make malicious comments about the school and members of staff or about decisions made by the Principal (or Trust). This can be destabilising for a community, the professional status of staff members who may have had allegations made against them and the emotional wellbeing of children and young people who may have been identified.

However commonplace social media is in society now, it does not mean that this behaviour should be tolerated, especially if it is directed at specific members of the school. All Principals aim for a partnership approach with parents and the best course of action is to speak directly with any members of the community involved when concerns are raised.

There is no single effective method of dealing with parents and carers who raise issues on social networking sites. However, you can take a proactive approach to minimise such incidents rather than having to be reactive and put together a quick response to stop the spread of rumours. This guidance gives several approaches you can use to deal with any problems as well as preventative approaches to help ensure that parents and carers follow the appropriate complaints procedures.

This guidance focusses on Facebook and Twitter as they are currently the most common sources of concern; additional guidance for reporting and responding to concerns or other popular social networking sites can be gained if needed.

## 2. Responding to Specific Concerns

Every situation is different and should be reviewed on its own merits. This guidance outlines the steps we would encourage you to take when responding to specific concerns. A flow chart to support this is provided at Appendix 1.

### A. Keep Calm

Although sometimes difficult, it is essential that you ensure that your response to comments posted on social media is proportionate and impartial. Overreactions or emotionally led responses are likely to inflame the situation, which can mean that a successful positive outcome is less likely to occur for all involved.

Everyone has opinions and it is not always possible to prevent parents or others posting them on line. Unless the comments make a credible threat towards someone's safety (such as death threats or other specific threats of violence towards staff), name a teacher who is subject to an allegation, contain hate content or could be considered as harassment (and therefore a criminal offence has been committed) then

the comments cannot always be removed. Please see Appendix 2 for further details on potential legal implications.

The best course of action may be to speak to the individuals involved. However, in some cases you may decide to monitor the situation. In these situations, you should still follow the below guidance regarding gathering evidence in case action is required at a later stage.

## B. Gather Evidence

When you become aware of any information which is damaging towards an individual or the school community, it is important to gather evidence like screen shots and printouts, including times and dates and names where possible. It is also important if it has been received from a third party that their information is removed. This evidence should be held on file.

When dealing with cases involving Facebook, a group of parents may have set up a site or closed/secret group to comment about or in some cases, criticise the school or individual members of staff. This is usually done through a Facebook page which is then 'liked' by those with an account or via closed or secret group where by members have to request to join or be invited by another group member. On a Facebook page the comments will always be public; however in a closed or secret group they will only be visible to other group members. It is important, where possible, to find out who has set up the page or group, as usually this is the parent or carer who has the grievance. It can sometimes be difficult to trace the owner of a Facebook "page" however a closed group will publically identify the members and also which members are "administrators."

It is also essential, at this stage, that members of staff, including non-teaching staff and Council members, do not become embroiled in any of the discussion threads as this sometimes can inflame the situation. You should ensure that members of staff are aware of how to respond to concerns – see section 4 'Preventative Actions'.

In some cases parents may post comments on their own personal Facebook profiles. The visibility of these comments will depend on the individual parent's privacy settings. If a comment is public (this is indicated by the presence of a globe icon next to the post) then it will be visible to anyone who has access to the internet, even if they do not have a Facebook account. Other privacy settings may include "friends only" (only those people who are friends with the original poster can see the comment) or "friends of friends". It is important for all Facebook users to be aware that even if a comment has been shared with "friends only" it is still possible for other users to "share" their friend's comments with their own Facebook friends or take screenshots. In cases where comments have been shared with "friends only", it is essential that you ensure that the identity of the person who brought the concern to the schools' attention is protected as far as possible.

## C. Reassuring those affected

It is important that any evidence is kept to enable schools to collate a record of events; this should include usernames, specific dates and times, as well as actions taken by the school. In many situations this will be a one off concern which can be resolved quickly, however in some situations this could be part of a bigger or ongoing issue; therefore a clear chronology will be essential if further action is required.

### C.1 Supporting Staff

If individual members of staff have been targeted or mentioned, then you will need to be mindful of our duty of care to those involved as there is a specific duty on employers to protect their staff from third party harassment.

Appropriate support will depend on the nature of the concerns and the reaction of the individual. If the member of staff is already aware of the comments, then you should explain to them how you intend to address the concerns and offer support to them. You should encourage staff to let you know if there is any further support that they feel they need.

If the member of staff is unaware of the comments, then you should consider if it is necessary to inform them, and if so, what would be the best approach. Depending on the nature of the comments, then this decision may require additional advice from the Trust, HR, LADO (if there is an allegation), Safeguarding Officers.

- All staff have access to Health Assured which includes advice on such matters and support on 0800 030 5182 or via the website <https://healthassuredeap.co.uk/>
- Staff may wish to contact their professional association or Trade Union for support or guidance
- Leaders can access support via the Trust leadership and HR Department
- Staff can also access support via HR
- If an allegation has been made then Principals or other leaders will need to speak with the LADO who will also provide guidance

Additional links and support:

- The Professionals online safety helpline has useful guidance for schools: [www.saferinternet.org.uk/news/minimising-reputational-risk-advice-for-professionals](http://www.saferinternet.org.uk/news/minimising-reputational-risk-advice-for-professionals)
  - Childnet Teacher Guidance: [www.childnet.com/teachers-and-professionals/for-you-as-a-professional](http://www.childnet.com/teachers-and-professionals/for-you-as-a-professional)
  - The Department for Education Preventing and Tackling Bullying (July 2017) [www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-and-tackling-bullying](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-and-tackling-bullying)
- Your recognised union, if you are a member, may have very useful guidance available or on their website eg NAHT [www.naht.org.uk](http://www.naht.org.uk)

## C.2 Supporting other members of the community

There have been cases where negative or malicious comments posted on social media have not been about a member of staff but have been made against a child or another parent. It is important that you are aware of the need to promote the wellbeing and safety of the whole school community. However, you should also be aware of some of the limitations and be clear about how achievable this may be in some cases.

When responding to issues where parents are writing negative or unkind comments about other parents, the school may need to consider how best to mediate concerns (if appropriate) and to what extent they are able to resolve concerns if they are having a detrimental impact on the school. In cases where there is a concern regarding physical violence, you may need to involve other agencies.

In some cases, there may be a requirement for you to consider the potential safeguarding impact (including emotional consequences or the potential risk to physical safety) or children if comments are made on line about them by parents. This may require involvement of other external agencies in line with existing safeguarding procedures. If you are unclear about how to respond then you should seek advice from the Trust or other advisors.

## D. Meet face to face with parents or carers involved

In the majority of incidents, a face to face meeting with the parents involved can resolve the matter. This allows the Principal or leader to identify the parents' particular concern and will help ensure that a suitable solution is put into place, or to instigate the school complaints process.

In many cases the reason why a parent or carer has made comments about the school or staff members online is due to being oblivious about the implications of making such comments, or because they are unaware of or disillusioned with the school's complaints procedure. An immediate response in writing can occasionally inflame situations (and indeed in some cases ends up being shared on social media itself) so a face to face or "offline" discussion is likely to have a more positive outcome. If multiple parents are involved then schools should consider how best to respond safely and effectively, whilst maintaining confidentiality. This may require multiple meetings with parents on an individual basis.

The Principal (or other appropriate member of senior leadership or Trust staff) should meet with the parents to express their disappointment with the current situation and explain that the school would like to work with them to resolve the problem that is obviously causing them distress. Principals should address the matter of social networking with the parents concerned and explain how this behaviour can have a detrimental impact on the school and potentially their children's education, whilst not allowing the school to actually address their concerns.

It can be helpful, to discuss the importance of considering any messages they post online in the future, as these can have a detrimental impact on themselves as well as the wider school community. Parents should be made aware that comments posted online (even if made "privately") can easily be misread or misinterpreted and can also be shared without their knowledge or consent.

At this meeting it is important that printouts of the allegations or comments are available for parents, again schools should take steps to ensure that any content which could identify the individual who brought it to the school's attention is removed.

At this stage, it is important that the Principal requests that any offending posts or pages are immediately removed and encourages the parents to work with the school, following the school's complaints procedure if they are unhappy. If parents refuse to remove content then Principals can then report the concern to the website (see appendix 4 for advice regarding reports to Facebook) or escalate the concern to the Professional Online Safety helpline: [www.saferinternet.org.uk/helpline](http://www.saferinternet.org.uk/helpline).

If the meeting does not have a successful outcome then it is important for the Principal to stress that the school may have to take further action to resolve the matter. Although it is essential not to cause any further problems, the professional status of staff and the school needs to be maintained and it cannot be compromised by any malicious comments or allegations. The school may want to warn the parents that any existing comments or a continuation of posts could lead to civil or criminal action being taken, although the school would prefer to avoid having to take this route.

If Principals think that a criminal offence has been committed, or believe that speaking directly to the parents would lead to a confrontation or offence being committed, then they should contact their local police to work together to support the school in discussing this with the parent concerned in more detail.

### 3. Resolving Difficult Situations

If the matter is not resolved through a face to face meeting, the school has a number of options to try and address the situation. While the school will not want to escalate the matter unnecessarily, it is crucial that they try to come to a sensible and proportionate conclusion.

A. Arrange a further meeting and invite a Trust leader (or Chair of Academy Council)

To ensure that the parents understand the seriousness of the matter, a further meeting could be arranged with an appropriate Trust leader or Chair of the Academy Council present to convey the damage that these comments are having on the school community. It is essential that the individual accompanying the Principal is fully briefed before the meeting and that a common approach is taken by the school to address this matter. Again, it gives an opportunity for the parents to share any grievances and for an action plan to be established to deal with any concerns expressed by them.

If parents refuse to meet with the school, then the Principal/Trust leaders/Chair of Academy Council may wish to use the final letter in appendix 2. Please note that all other options should be explored before using this letter.

B. Report content to the site involved

If the parents do not agree to remove any offending content or pages they have set up, then the school can report content to the website where it has been posted. Usually this raises a "ticket" with those who monitor content on the site so that they can assess this in relation to whether any of the terms and conditions have been violated. Schools have to be aware that there will be a time delay in the review of this content and that if the content does not breach the terms and conditions, then the site administrators will not remove it. Forced removal of comments may only occur if the comments break the laws or break the website's terms and conditions.

Information about how concerns can be reported to Facebook and Twitter can be found in appendix 4 and 5 respectively. For other sites, it may be helpful to visit the site being used as many will have a help or report section.

C. Take further advice

The final step in some cases may be for a school to seek legal advice on comments posted on a social media site. In some cases this has resulted in a letter from a solicitor being sent out to the parents warning them that malicious allegations could result in legal action. Principals should be aware that in some cases this can have a detrimental impact and can inflame situations further, so it is recommended to try all other possible routes before proceeding.

In cases where a criminal offence has been committed then police advice should be sought at an early stage. This should usually take place via 101, but if there is an immediate risk of harm to any member of the school community this should be reported via 999. It is advisable that schools record any crime reference numbers etc, even if police action is not considered to be necessary.

If an allegation has been made against a member of staff then advice must be sought from the LADO service.

If the school is concerned that an issue may receive media attention, then they may also wish to seek advice from the Trust.

In any event the Trust should be informed as soon as further action is thought to be necessary.

#### D. Dealing with complaints from members of the public

In some cases, complaints may be posted on social media by a member of the public; this could be a friend or family member of a parent, or someone complete unknown to the school. In these situations, schools may only be able to act if the comments are criminal or deemed to have broken the sites terms and conditions.

If the person is known to a parent (for example, they have comments on parents own post on their Facebook profile), the best approach will be to discuss the concern with the parent as outlined in section 2.

If the person is not identifiable (for example anonymous accounts on google reviews or Twitter profiles), the school should report the content to the site concerned but be aware that it may not be removed.

If the comments posted by a member of the public give the school a reason to believe that a member of the community is at risk of harm (such as credible threats are made against an individual) or believe a criminal offence has been committed, advice should be sought from the police.

You should consider if it is always required to you to respond directly to complaints made by members of the public. If it is deemed necessary, it is important to ensure the response is proportionate and impartial; overreactions or emotionally led responses are likely to inflame the situation further. In some cases, you may decide that the best response will be to monitor the situation. You should still gather evidence and record decision making, in case further action is required at a later stage.

If you are concerned that an issue posted online by a member of the public may receive media attention you should report this to the Trust which may involve their PR consultant.

## 4. Preventative Actions

Allegations or malicious comments against members of staff or the school can have an unwanted effect on the school's ethos, which can result in a detrimental effect on children and young people. It is crucial that schools take steps to try and prevent these types of issues from reoccurring.

It is important for us all to be realistic about what we hope to achieve when responding to negative comments or complaints on social media. You should remember that it isn't always possible to prevent parents posting comments online, and comments cannot always be removed. The focus should therefore be on achieving the best outcomes for children, especially if they are at the centre of the concern.

#### A. Build a whole community ethos towards safe use of social networking

Schools may wish to regularly highlight awareness regarding use of social networking such as via schools newsletters etc. Example text and letters can be found in appendix 3.

If there have been specific issues, schools could consider sending a specific letter to parents to encourage them to be mindful about what they post on social networking sites and to be aware of the impact such comments could have on the school community. The letter could also include the fact that unpleasant or hurtful comments should not be posted online as they may potentially be considered as a criminal offence. For template letters please see appendix 3.

The school may want to remind all parents of the schools official communication and complaints channels which are available to be used should they need them, as this is the most appropriate way of dealing with any



concerns. Schools may also wish to remind parents that they can “report” any unpleasant comments or content to Facebook or other social networking sites, who may remove comments and block/ban users who break these rules. Parents should also be aware of the importance of role modelling appropriate behaviour for their children online, much like they should offline.

You should ensure that all members of staff receive safeguarding training that is robust and up to date and covers online safety (as identified within the latest version of “Keeping Children Safe in Education”). This training should include ensuring that all members of staff know how to respond to concerns they may see online in a way that supports the school and also does not compromise them. You should ensure that all members of staff sign an Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) and are aware of expectations with regards their use of social media.

#### B. Acceptable Use Policy (AUP)

The Trust has an AUP which is signed by staff and pupils/parents to ensure that they use digital technology and the internet within school safely and understand the sanctions resulting from breaches of this policy. Schools should include statements that refer to parental support on this matter and these also ask parents to monitor children and young people’s use of digital technology and social media while they are out of school. The policy should be reviewed and, where necessary, updated on an annual basis; and schools could include a statement on parental use of social networking. Please be aware that this approach can sometimes be difficult to enforce.

Suggested statement:
“As a parent, I support school safeguarding policies and I will ensure that I monitor my child’s use of the internet (including social networking) outside of school. I will act as a positive role model to my child by ensuring that I use social networking sites responsibly.”

#### C. Schools policies (including the Complaints Policy)

Whenever there is a dispute between a parent and the school, it is important that the complaints procedure is followed so that grievances are taken seriously and solutions can be quickly found to ensure that the child or young person’s education is not disrupted. The complaints policy should be easily accessible via the school’s website. Principals may also wish to draw attention to this concern in other related policies including anti-bullying, Safeguarding, online safety, data protection/security and confidentiality.

In accordance with the latest version of “Keeping Children Safe in Education”, schools will need to have a staff code of conduct, which includes the use of social media. Schools and settings may choose to have a specific social media policy (or integrate this within existing policies such as an online safety policy). A social media policy should cover appropriate use of social media by the school and also identify appropriate behaviour on social media for all members of the community.

#### D. Home-School Agreements

Trust schools have a contract between parents and the school to ensure that children and young people are fully supported with their learning and welfare both inside and out of the classroom. Many of the statements refer to parents reinforcing schools’ policies on homework, behaviour and conduct. In order to counter any parent discussing sensitive issues about individual teachers or pupils on social networks, the Trust has decided to include a statement on the Home-School Agreement to try and stop parents from making derogatory or malicious comments. While it is difficult to monitor all parents’ use of social networking sites, it does show that the school takes this matter seriously and, the fact that parents have signed the agreement, means that they have a responsibility to act appropriately.

This statement will be included in the agreement to be used from September 2020 onwards:-

Parents and carers are reminded to use existing structures when making any complaint about the school or a member of staff. They are advised not to discuss any matters on social networking sites.

E. Promote positive use of social media

The Trust uses social media proactively as a positive engagement tool for parents. Many social media complaints arise out of parental frustrations and because parents may feel that they are not listened to or valued by schools. This is why many parents take the matter out of the schools hands and set up unofficial and unapproved Facebook pages or groups.

In some cases Facebook pages or groups may be set up and run (either officially or unofficially) via parent teachers associations or other similar groups. It is important that in these cases the Principal is involved in ensuring that the groups are run in accordance with the school policies and clear boundaries are in place about appropriate online behaviour.

If a school has an official and appropriately managed Facebook page or group then this can minimise some of the concerns or ensure that the school has a way to respond appropriately via an official and approved communication channel.

F. Other approaches

Principals may want to consider implementing a range of routes to encourage parents to raise concerns directly with the school, for example ensuring a senior member of staff is available on the gate at the start and end of the day, dedicated email accounts etc.

## 5. Conclusion

In the age of social media, all institutions need to be robust against criticisms and opinions. Complaints by parents are nothing new for schools as, in the past, many have made comments on the playground or at the school gate or have gone to local media outlets such as newspapers to highlight decisions or issues in schools. The main issue is that in today's society, these complaints can easily be shared in the public domain and a post on a social networking site can reach thousands of users instantly, damaging reputations and giving a misleading slant to any issue.

Schools cannot monitor every comment posted on social networking sites, but they can be proactive in trying to ensure that parents and carers are aware of the appropriate processes in place to raise complaints or concerns, as well as their responsibility to act as a "positive online role model" to their children.

## Appendix 1: What to do if a Complaint is made on Social Networking by a Parent or Carer

**Who made the complaint?**

- Where was it posted? Eg Facebook profile, page or group?
- Who made the comment?
- Who brought it to the schools attention?
- Do you have evidence eg a screenshot with names and dates?

**What is the nature of the complaint?**

- Are they raising a valid concern?
- Does it name specific members of the community or the school itself?
- Is there a criminal offence eg credible threat? If so contact the Police – use 999 if there is an immediate risk of harm or 101 if not
- Is it making an allegation against a member of staff? If so contact the LADO
- If unsure then access support eg Trust education team, Safeguarding Team

**Comments are considered to be inappropriate and action is required**

**Comments are considered to be minor issue and no action required**

**School Leaders to speak with parents/carers face to face**

- Sanitise screenshots
- Discuss concerns with parents/carers involved
- Advise of school complaints process
- Request Removal
- Record decision making and action taken

**Monitor situation**

- Keep screenshots
- Record actions and decision making

**Support, review and record**

- Provide appropriate support to those targeted
- Communicate expectations regarding use of social networking with the community eg newsletters, letters etc
- Record concerns, actions and decision making
- Revisit preventative approaches
- Review current policies and procedures, and implement changes if required

**If situation reoccurs, is unresolved or escalates**

- Arrange formal meeting with Chair of Governors
- Report content for removal
- Take further advice

## Appendix 2: Legal Information

In most circumstances where parents or members of the public are expressing an opinion, it is not possible to take legal action. However, if settings feel it is necessary to pursue a legal course, we recommend they contact legal advisors or the Police.

In some situations, comments posted on social media may be a criminal or civil offence: if so, action could be considered under some of the following legislation.

***This is not legal guidance; settings are advised to take appropriate legal advice if required. Please note that this list is not exhaustive, and, in some cases, other legislation may apply.***

### Criminal Concerns

- **Protection from Harassment Act 1997:** This Act is relevant for incidents that have happened repeatedly (ie on more than two occasions). The Protection from Harassment Act 1997 makes it a criminal and civil offence to pursue a course of conduct which causes alarm and distress, which includes the publication of words. The victim can also bring a civil claim for damages and an injunction against the abuser, although this is a remedy that is only used by individuals with the financial means to litigate. It is only possible if the abuser can be identified, which is not always possible.
- **Malicious Communications Act 1988:** Section 1 makes it an offence to send an indecent, grossly offensive or threatening letter, electronic communication or other article to another person with the intention that it cause them distress or anxiety.
- **Public Order Act 1986 (sections 17-29):** This Act makes it a criminal offence to stir up racial hatred by displaying, publishing or distributing written material which is threatening.
- **Communications Act 2003:** Section 127 covers all forms of public communications, and subsection (1) defines an offence of sending a 'grossly offensive ... obscene, indecent or menacing' communication. Subsection (2) defines a separate offence where for the purposes of causing annoyance, inconvenience or needless anxiety, a person sends a message which that person knows to be false (or causes it to be sent) or persistently makes use of a public communications system.
- **Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006:** This Act makes it a criminal offence to threaten people because of their faith, or to stir up religious hatred by displaying, publishing or distributing written material which is threatening.
- **The Education Act 2011** makes it an offence to publish the name of a teacher who is subject to an allegation until such time as that they are charged with an offence. All members of the community need to be aware of the importance of not publishing named allegations against teachers online as this can lead to prosecution; settings should contact the LADO for further guidance.

### Civil Concerns: Libel and Privacy

Comments made online by parents could possibly be classed as 'libel' in some cases. Libel is defined as 'defamation by written or printed words, pictures, or in any form other than by spoken words or gestures'. The authors of such comments can be held accountable under Defamation law, which was created to protect individuals or organisations from unwarranted, mistaken or untruthful attacks on their reputation.

Defamation is a civil 'common law' tort in respect of which the Defamation Acts of 1952 and 1996 provide certain defences. It applies to any published material that damages the reputation of an individual or an organisation, and it includes material published on the internet. A civil action for defamation can be brought by an individual or a company, but not by a public authority. Libel is a civil and not a criminal issue and

specific legal advice may be required. Legal advice should be sought if settings or individuals wish to consider taking further action.

Where defamatory material is posted on a website, the person affected can inform the host of its contents and ask the host to remove it. Once the host knows that the material is there and that it may be defamatory, it can no longer rely on the defence of innocent dissemination in the

Defamation Act 1996. This means that the person affected could (if the material has been published in the jurisdiction ie in England and Wales) obtain a court order (an injunction) to require removal of the material and could sue either the host or the person who posted the material for defamation. Legal advice should be sought if settings or individuals wish to consider taking this action.

## Other issues

If social media is used to publish private and confidential information (for example breaches or data protection act) about an individual, it could give rise to a potential privacy claim. It is possible to seek an injunction and damages. Legal advice should be sought if settings or individuals wish to consider this action.

## Appendix 3: Template letters

Please be aware that settings must not share any information which could compromise a live police investigation; please seek advice if this is a concern.

### i. Preventative approaches

## General Awareness Information for Newsletters

At (name) we strive to achieve the best for all children, however we recognise that on some occasions you may feel that we could have done better. We would like to encourage you to come in and discuss any concerns with us by (insert details e.g. speaking with the headteacher/manager).

We would be grateful if parents do not use social media to raise complaints but instead, we encourage you to come into school and speak with us so that we can understand your concerns and help solve the problem. Complaints on social media can be damaging for the school/setting, its staff and most importantly the children.

If you feel that an issue has not been dealt with appropriately, we will provide you with a copy of the formal complaints procedures.

## General Awareness Letter for all parents

Dear Parent/Carers

Online Safety is an important part of keeping children safe at [school name]. We can only be successful in keeping children safe online if we work with you to ensure that safety messages are consistent and that all members of the community behave safely and appropriately online. We are writing to you to request your support in ensuring that our children have responsible online role models when posting and sharing content on social media sites. Whilst we are all entitled to have our own views and opinions, we would like to ask that all members of our community consider how our comments may be misunderstood or misinterpreted when shared online, and the possible impact and consequences on others of our online actions.

If parents have any concerns or complaints regarding the school, then we would like to request that they be made using official channels, so we can work together to help resolve the concerns. The complaints procedure and anti-bullying policy and other relevant policies (such as behaviour or child protection policies) are available online via our website [link] or upon request at the office.

As responsible adults it's important we all consider the potential impact and implications of online behaviour for ourselves and our families, as well as other members of the community. Our school is keen to work in partnership with parents and carers to promote responsible internet use and acknowledge how important your role is in setting a good example of positive and responsible online behaviour for your child.

More information about online safety can be found at the following places:

- [www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents)
- [www.saferinternet.org.uk](http://www.saferinternet.org.uk)

- [www.childnet.com](http://www.childnet.com)
- [www.nscpsc.org.uk/onlinesafety](http://www.nscpsc.org.uk/onlinesafety)
- [www.internetmatters.org](http://www.internetmatters.org)

If parents/carers wish to discuss this matter further or have any other online safety concerns the please contact [Name] Designated Safeguarding Lead, or myself (if different).

Many thanks in advance for your support in this matter,

**[Name] Principal**

## ii. Letters following specific issues

- Do not use this letter if sharing it could identify members of the community.
- Do not send this letter until after parents involved have been spoken with.

## Template Incident Letter (following a specific issue) for all parents

Dear Parent/Carers

Online Safety is an important part of keeping children safe at [school]. We can only be successful in keeping children safe online if we work with you to ensure that online safety messages are consistent and that all members of the community behave safely and appropriately online.

Unfortunately, it has been brought to our attention that some parents have been using xxxx as a forum to complain and/or be abusive about the school and/or members of staff/parents/children in the school community. Whilst we are all entitled to have our own views and opinions, we would like to ask that all members of our community consider how this may be misunderstood or misinterpreted when shared online and the possible impact and consequences of these actions. We have spoken to those parents concerned and whilst we can continue to raise the profile of online safety, we need the help of the whole community to support us in keeping our wider community safe online.

It is important that all members of our community understand that the use of technology (including social networking, mobile phones, games consoles and other websites) to deliberately threaten, upset, harass, intimidate or embarrass someone else could be viewed as cyberbullying or harassment. Cyberbullying is just as harmful as bullying in the real world and is not tolerated at

[school name]. We take all instances of cyberbullying or harassment involving any members of our community very seriously as we want members of the community to feel safe.

Posting threatening, obscene or offensive comments online can potentially be considered as a criminal offence and can therefore have serious consequences.

Any complaints should be made using the correct and official channels, so we can work together to help resolve any concerns that parents may have. The complaints procedure, anti-bullying policy and other relevant policies (such as behaviour or child protection policies) are available online via our website (link) or upon request at the office.

I would like to ask all parents to think carefully about the information and comments they post online. As responsible adults it's important that we all consider the potential impact and implications posting such content may have on you and your family as well as other members of the community. I would also like to remind all parents about the need for us all to work in partnership to promote responsible internet use. Your role in setting a good example of positive and responsible online behaviour for your child is crucial.

If parents wish to discuss this matter further, or have any other online safety concerns the please contact [Name] Designated Safeguarding Lead, or myself (if different).

Many thanks in advance for your support in this matter,

**[Name] Principal**

### iii. Letter to use with parents specifically involved in concerns

• This template should be used with care and only sent if settings are unable to meet with parents involved face to face.

**Dear parent/carer**

It has been drawn to my attention that you have recently made comments online on [site] relating to [event]. I enclose a screenshot of the material in question, which you will note has been signed and dated.

I am disappointed that you have chosen to use this medium to express these views and I am greatly concerned about the tone of the comments made and their abusive and threatening nature [substitute for more appropriate adjectives if necessary] relating to another member of our community.

It is important that all members of our community understand that the use of technology (including social networking, mobile phones, games consoles and other websites) to deliberately threaten, upset, harass, intimidate or embarrass someone else could be viewed as cyberbullying or harassment. Cyberbullying is just as harmful as bullying in the real world and is not tolerated by our school/setting; (School name) take all instances of cyberbullying or harassment involving any members of our community seriously, as we want members of the community to feel safe and happy both on and offline.

Please contact me at your earliest convenience to arrange an appointment as I would appreciate a meeting with you to discuss this matter in an open and constructive manner. I emphasise, that the conversation will remain confidential. My colleague [insert name and role] will be present to act as note-taker and you may also wish to be accompanied by a family member or friend (if needed).

I am sure that we will be able to resolve this situation and achieve a positive outcome and I look forward to meeting with you.

Yours sincerely,

**[Name] Principal**

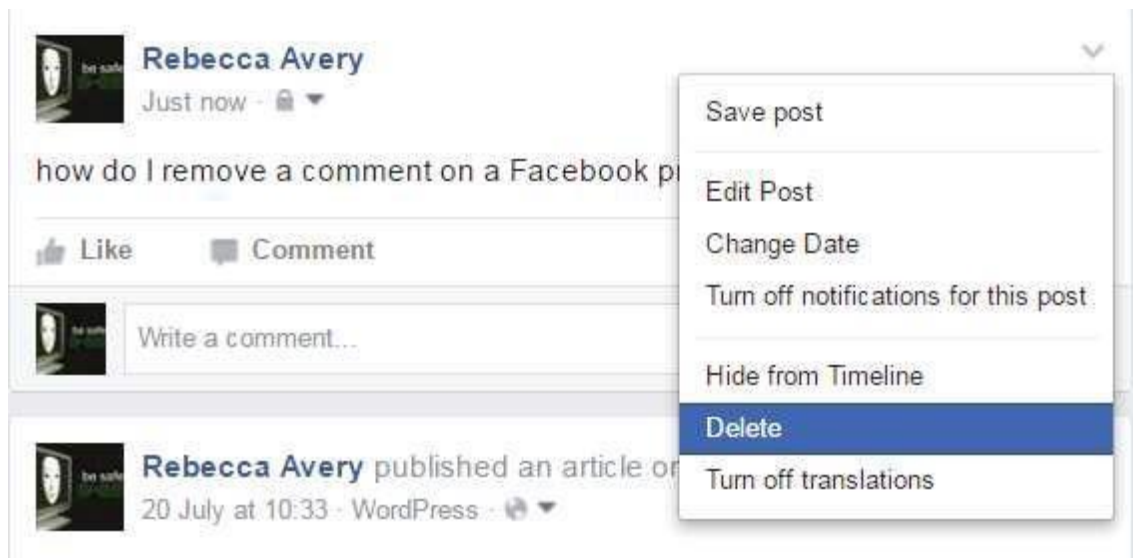
**Appendix 4: How to report/remove content on Facebook**



## Removal

### To remove a Facebook post

To remove a comment of a Facebook profile the user must access their profile and click on in the top right of the post and then select the “delete”



### To remove a Facebook page

Only Facebook or the page administrator can delete a Facebook page. To remove a page admin should:

1. Click Settings at the top of your Page
2. From General, click Remove Page
3. Click Delete [Page name] and follow the on-screen instructions

### To remove a Facebook group

Only Facebook or the page administrator can delete a Facebook group. Groups are deleted when they have no members. If you've created a group, you can delete the group by removing all its members and then yourself.

1. Go to the group you want to delete and click Members below the cover photo
2. Click next to each member's name and select Remove from Group
3. Select Leave Group next to your name once you've removed the other members

Note: An admin can't delete a group they didn't create unless the original creator chooses to leave it.

## Reporting

When something gets reported to Facebook, they will review it and remove anything that doesn't follow the [Facebook Community Standards](#). Facebook don't include any information about the person who filed the

report when they reach out to the person responsible. Please keep in mind that reporting something to Facebook doesn't guarantee that it will be removed.

Headteachers/managers may wish to encourage the member of the community who brought the concern to the settings attention to report the issue themselves.

#### **Finding the URL (web address) of a Facebook post**

Please note this is not always possible to obtain via the Facebook app. Access will be required via a web browser.

To get a URL:

1. Click the date or time link in the post or comment
2. Copy the link in the web address bar (see EXAMPLE below)



#### **Reporting without an Account**

If the headteacher/manager does not have a Facebook account, a report can be made via this form: [www.facebook.com/help/contact/274459462613911](https://www.facebook.com/help/contact/274459462613911)

To report a concern without an account then you will require the link (URL) to the specific content you're reporting (see above). If you're unable to provide the link to the content, Facebook may be able to find the content if you provide as much of the information below as possible:

- Link to the Facebook profile, Page or group that created the content that you're reporting, and the time and date that the content was posted
- A screenshot of the abusive content. If possible, the screenshot should include the name of the person, Page or group that created the content you're reporting and the time and date it was posted.

#### **To report a Facebook profile:**

1. Go to the profile you want to report
2. In the bottom right of the cover photo, click and select **Report**
3. Follow the on-screen instructions

#### **To report a specific comment/post:**

1. Click in the top right of the post you want to report and select **I don't want to see this**
2. Click **Why don't you want to see this?**
3. Choose the option that best describes the issue and follow the on-screen instructions

#### **To report a photo or video:**

1. Click on the photo or video to expand it
2. Click **Options** in the bottom right
3. Click **Report Photo** for photos or **Report Video** for videos

**To report a message:**

1. Open the message you'd like to report
2. Click **Actions** in the top right
3. Click **Report Spam or Abuse...** and follow the on-screen instructions

**To report an abusive Page:**

1. Go to the Page you want to report
2. Click on the Page's cover photo
3. Select **Report Page** and follow the on-screen instructions

Facebook will review the Page and remove anything that doesn't follow the [Facebook Community Standards](#). Facebook may also warn or disable the person responsible.

**To report a group:**

1. Go to the group you want to report
2. Click at the top right
3. Pick **Report Group** from the dropdown menu

**To report a comment:**

1. In the top right, click
2. Select **Report**

## Appendix 5: How to report/remove content on Twitter

### Removal

#### To delete a Tweet

1. Visit your **Profile** page.
2. Locate the Tweet you want to delete.
3. Click the icon 4. Click **Delete Tweet**.

#### Be aware:

- When a Tweet is deleted, it is removed from the users account, the timeline of any accounts that follow the user, and from Twitter search results.
- Retweets of the deleted Tweet will also be removed.
- If other people have copied and pasted part or all of the text into their own Tweet, their Tweets will not be removed.
- If other people have Retweeted the Tweet with a comment of their own, their Tweets will not be removed.
- Tweets may be cached or cross-posted on third-party websites, applications, or search engines. Twitter cannot remove Tweets that are not on twitter.com, Twitter for iOS, or Twitter for Android.

### Reporting

When something gets reported to Twitter, they will review it and remove anything that doesn't follow the [Twitter Rules](#) or [Terms of Service](#). Specific policies that may be helpful to access include the [Hateful conduct policy](#) and the [Trademark policy](#).

Twitter doesn't include any information about the person who filed the report when they reach out to the person responsible. Please keep in mind that reporting something to Twitter doesn't guarantee that it will be removed or that an account will be suspended.

Anyone can report abusive behaviour directly on Twitter. Headteachers/managers may wish to encourage the member of the community who brought the concern to the settings' attention to report the issue themselves.

It's important to be aware that once you have reported content to Twitter, it will disappear from your timeline or inbox; it's therefore recommended that you obtain screenshots (including usernames, times and dates) before doing this.

Additional information about reporting abusive behaviour to Twitter can be found at:

<https://help.twitter.com/en/safety-and-security/report-abusive-behavior>

#### How to find a Tweet's URL

In some cases, it may be helpful to access the [URL](#) (web address of a Tweet)

1. Navigate to the Tweet you'd like the URL of.
2. Click the icon located within the Tweet.
3. From the pop-up menu, select Copy link to Tweet. The URL should now be copied to your clipboard.

Whenever you view a Tweet's permanent link, you can see:

- The exact time and date the Tweet was posted.
- The number of favourites and retweets the Tweet received.

### **Reporting without a Twitter account**

If the headteacher/manager does not have a twitter account, a report of someone on Twitter engaging in abusive or harassing behaviour can be made via this form:

<https://help.twitter.com/forms/abusiveuser>

To report a concern without an account then you will require the link (URL) to the specific content you're reporting (see above how to do this).

### **How to report profiles for violations:**

1. Open the profile you'd like to report.
2. Select the overflow icon (via twitter.com and Twitter for Android) or tap the gear icon (from Twitter for iOS).
3. Select Report and then select the type of issue you'd like to report.
4. If you select 'They're being abusive or harmful', Twitter will ask you to provide additional information about the issue you're reporting. Twitter may also ask you to select additional Tweets from the account you're reporting so they have a better context to evaluate your report.
5. Twitter will include the text of the Tweets you reported in any follow-up emails and notifications to you. To opt-out of receiving this information, please uncheck the box next to 'Updates about this report can show these Tweets'.
6. Once you've submitted your report, Twitter may provide recommendations for additional actions.

### **How to report an individual Direct Message:**

1. Click into the Direct Message conversation and find the message you'd like to flag.
2. Hover over the message and click the report icon when it appears.
3. Select 'Report @username'.
4. If you select 'It's abusive or harmful', Twitter will ask you to provide additional information about the issue you're reporting. Twitter may also ask you to select additional messages from the account you're reporting so they have better context to evaluate your report.
5. Once you've submitted your report, Twitter provide recommendations for additional actions you can take to improve your Twitter experience.

### **How to report a Tweet:**

1. Navigate to the Tweet you'd like to report on twitter.com or from the Twitter for iOS or Android app.
2. Click or tap the icon.
3. Select Report.
4. Select 'It's abusive or harmful'.
5. Twitter will ask you to provide more information about the issue you're reporting. Twitter may also ask you to select additional Tweets from the account you're reporting so they have better context to evaluate your report.

6. Twitter will include the text of the Tweets you reported in follow-up emails and notifications to you. To opt-out of receiving this information, please uncheck the box next to 'Updates about this report can show these Tweets'.
7. Once you've submitted your report, Twitter will provide recommendations for additional actions.

**How to report an account that has been blocked:**

You can report an account that you have blocked or that has blocked you.

1. Go to that account's profile and click or tap the gear icon or overflow icon and select 'Report'.
2. Twitter will ask you to provide additional information about the issue you're reporting.