**Using social media – a guide for parent groups**

**What can my group use social media for?**

Using social media can be a great way to communicate with other parents and the wider community.

* It can help reach more parents, including those who can’t always make it along to meetings
* It can help with communication between parents and the school.
* It’s quick, free, easy to use and lots of different people can contribute.
* It can be used to spread the word about your parent group.
* It can be used to easily spread messages to more parents and pupils.
* It can be used to advertise events, spread the word about campaigns and share news.

**What different platforms are available and what are the benefits?**

**Facebook**

Facebook is the most popular social media platform for parent groups because it can do many different things

Facebook can be used to set up a **Facebook Page** or a **Facebook Group**.

**What is a Facebook Page?**

A **Facebook Page** is similar to setting up a miniature website within Facebook. Setting up a Facebook Page is the best option if your group wants to use Facebook to connect with any and all parents, pupils (age 13+) and the wider school community. This option would allow you to advertise events and share news more widely.

With a Facebook Page, one or more agreed people (administrators) will be able to post updates and users will be able to comment on the posts using their own Facebook accounts. Any person with a Facebook account will be able to “like” the page and see and interact with any updates from the page on their Facebook timeline. You cannot control who “likes” the page but it is possible to block and remove users.

**What is a Facebook Group?**

A **Facebook Group** is a more private option. A secret group page can be set up within Facebook and one or more agreed people (administrators) can invite members to join the group. People can only join the group if they are invited. Only people who are in the group can see what is being posted and shared and add comments and posts of their own. This is a better option for parent groups who only want to use Facebook as a communication tool to speak between themselves, perhaps to share minutes from meetings, organise events or invite comments and input from parents who could not attend the meeting.

Examples of PC / PTA Facebook Pages:
[Camdean Primary School](https://www.facebook.com/Camdean-Parent-Council-310658325613952/about/)
[Gracemount PTA and Parent Council](https://www.facebook.com/gracemountprimary/?ref=br_rs)
[Clovenfords Primary School Parent Council](https://www.facebook.com/ClovenfordsPC/?ref=br_rs)
[Windygoul Parent Council](https://www.facebook.com/Windygoul-Parent-Council-105559606139823/?ref=br_rs)

**If you type “parent council” into your Facebook search bar and select the “pages” tab at the top you will see just how many PCs and PTAs are using Facebook now, and what they use their page for. Some have hundreds of likes!**

**Twitter**

Some of our most active PCs / PTAs are keen users of Twitter. Twitter is a much simpler platform that doesn’t have the different functions that Facebook does. When you set up a Twitter page, you can post updates of up to 140 characters (which can include links and images) to be viewed by your followers. Twitter is a good platform if you just want to share news about what your PTA / PC is doing or advertise events. Twitter moves more quickly than Facebook, so it’s common to post more often. Twitter pages are public which means anyone can view them, however there is an option to make your page private. With a private Twitter page, only followers approved by you will be able to view your posts.

**Lots of schools are on Twitter as well; do you know if your school is?**

Examples of PC / PTA Twitter pages:
[St Patrick’s PTA](https://twitter.com/stpats_pta)
[North Berwick High School PTA](https://twitter.com/NbhsPta)
[Stewarton Academy Parent Council](https://twitter.com/Stewac_PCouncil)

**What about security?**

Both Facebook and Twitter have adjustable security settings so that your content can be as public or as private as you choose.

When setting up a Facebook page it is advisable that this is done using a dummy account rather than the personal Facebook account of one of the PC / PTA members. For more guidance on how to set up a Facebook page or group, please see**:**[How to set up a Facebook Page](http://www.sptc.info/sptc-leaflets/how-to-set-up-a-facebook-page-for-parent-groups/)
[How to set up a Facebook Group](http://www.sptc.info/sptc-leaflets/how-to-set-up-a-facebook-group-for-parent-groups/)
[How to set up a Twitter Account](http://www.sptc.info/sptc-leaflets/how-to-set-up-a-twitter-account-for-parent-groups/)

**What about use of photographs?**

Posting photographs is a great way to get more people to engage with your post, however there are a few things to consider before posting:

* Once a photograph is online, anyone can save it, share it and distribute it. Photos can be deleted from social media, but if it has been saved or shared then there is no way of undoing this.
* You must have consent of any person who appears in the photograph before sharing it. If the photograph contains children under the age of 16 or vulnerable adults, consent must be given by their parent or guardian before the photo can be shared.

**How do we manage / monitor usage?**

Allocating administrators and setting ground rules:

**Facebook**

Whether setting up a page or a group on Facebook, you must allocate administrators to run the page or group.

With a Facebook Page, administrators are the only people who can:
•             Post updates from the page
•             Delete posts
•             Delete comments
•             Remove or block users
•             Control the page’s privacy settings, profile picture and cover photo.
•             Control who else has administrative and editing rights.

With a Facebook Group, administrators are the only people who can:
•             Invite people to join the group
•             Remove people from the group
•             Delete comments
•             Control the Group’s privacy settings, profile picture and cover photo
•             Control who else has administrative and editing rights.

When choosing who is going to administrate the page/group, it is best to choose people who are:
•             Familiar with Facebook and how to use it.
•             Have easy access to Facebook (perhaps on a smartphone)
•             Are willing to monitor it on a regular basis (i.e.: the page is checked at least once per
 day)

It is best to have at least two administrators for Facebook.

Set some ground rules for the use of the Facebook page or group, post this on Facebook and pin it to the top of your page or group. This pinned post will stay at the top of your page or group so people will see it each time they visit.

**Some good examples of rules are**:
- Do not post photos without permission from the people in them.
- Facebook is not a place for people to complain and air their grievances, keep negativity off the page.
- No abusive comments.
- Do not tag people’s personal accounts without their permission.
- Do not post any personal details such as addresses or contact details.

**Twitter**

Twitter doesn’t have an option to have multiple users on a single account. The best way to operate Twitter is just to make sure that only the selected administrators know what the username and password is for the account, so that only they can access it.

Administrators on Twitter will be the only ones who can post Tweets, reply to tweets, retweet other users, follow and unfollow other users, delete tweets and edit the profile and cover photos.

It is useful to select Twitter administrators in the same way as Facebook administrators (see above). It is also useful to develop ground rules and a usage policy.

**Developing a usage policy and examples**

It is good practice when setting up social media to develop a social media policy. This policy can be used to set:

* What purpose and aim of the Facebook or Twitter page is
* What kind of posts are appropriate
* How posts should be written (post length, writing style, use of images etc.)
* How often posts should be made
* How to deal with abusive comments
* How to deal with users who break the rules
* How administrators should be chosen
* How often the page should be monitored

A good example of a social media policy is that of Elmvale Primary School Parent Council. [You can view this here](http://www.elmvale-pri.glasgow.sch.uk/Websites/SchPriElmvale/UserFiles/file/socialmediapolicyparentcouncil.pdf)

**Good luck with your new channels!**

If you need any other advice or assistance with social media or you have a question that we haven’t answered here, please don’t hesitate to contact us. You can email seonaid@sptc.info for any advice on social media.

Finally, make sure you’re connected with SPTC on Facebook and Twitter! We update every day with education news and useful stuff for parents. You can find us here:

[www.facebook.com/SPTCinfo](http://www.facebook.com/SPTCinfo)
[www.twitter.com/parents\_sptc](http://www.twitter.com/parents_sptc)