



Yorkshire and Humber
Grid for Learning

Common Facebook issues for schools

and how to resolve them



Common Facebook issues for schools and how to resolve them

Introduction

Love it or loathe it, with over 28 million users in the UK alone, Facebook cannot be ignored. It is the social network of choice for many young people in our schools and it is difficult to accurately predict how many users on the site are under 18 years of age. If you do a quick straw poll of your class you will probably find the vast majority of them have at least one account perhaps several. The terms and conditions of the site state that users must be 13 and over, however, as there is no verification, many users simply lie about their age.

While many schools have taken the decision to block the site, unfortunately that doesn't stop issues arising at home and then spilling into the classroom. With the rise in popularity and availability of mobile internet many young people access the site through their own internet connected devices. If unchecked, these problems can escalate rapidly and have a detrimental impact on the rest of the class as well as the individual pupils concerned.

This guide will look at some of the common issues that schools are reporting and how to deal with them. The advice is split into two sections: 'Immediate Action' and 'Prevention Strategies.'

It is important to note that in order to address most common Facebook issues you will need to have an account. If you are going to create an account, make sure you keep professional and personal use completely separate. For further advice about this, download the following guide:



YHGfL Guide for Professionals Using Facebook

Look after your contact details

Sort your friends into lists

Facebook Places

Avoid appearing in Google and other search engines

Make sure young people cannot search for you

Think about who sees your photos

Look after posts that appear on your wall

Think about who else sees your friends

Be careful with photo tagging

Be careful with applications in your profile

How to report abuse

Using Facebook safely: A guide for professionals working with young people.

We know that many staff enjoy using Facebook but may find it difficult to know what settings they should choose to help keep themselves safe. YHGfL has produced a handy guide to help them out. This guide takes you through some of the risks and shows you the settings you can change to help protect yourself.

<http://www.yhgfl.net/eSafeguarding/eSafety>

Issues and Problems

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Unwanted Wall Posts

Typical Scenarios

A student or member of staff complains that people are posting nasty or upsetting comments on their Facebook wall.

A parent has complained that her child is being bullied on Facebook and that people are writing offensive things on her child's page.

Information

There are two ways that people can post on a Facebook wall. Due to the way that Facebook is set up, only people that your pupils have as 'Friends' can post comments on their wall. This means that your students can control who can post on their wall very easily through controlling their 'Friends' list.

Immediate action: Removing the unwanted post

To remove any posts from your profile, simply hover over the offending post and on the right-hand side you will see a cross and the word 'Remove' will appear. If you click this button you will be asked if you are sure and then the post will be deleted.

Finally it is important to block the person who is posting the unwanted comments. To do this, click on their profile and scroll down. On the left hand side you will see a list which includes the option to 'Report/Block This Person'. You will then be able to report or block. If you report you will be asked your reasons for reporting the user. It is possible to block a user without reporting them.

If your students are particularly concerned that posts are of a sexual or extreme nature, they may also need to report the post to the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) or the police.

They can do this in a number of ways such as visiting the CEOP website or, via the Facebook app, click CEOP. They could also call their local police station directly.

It is important that all of your pupils are aware of the role that CEOP have in protecting them online. You may wish to use the CEOP ThinkUknow presentation with your pupils which illustrates the 'Report abuse' button and the role of CEOP.

<http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>

<http://www.ceop.police.uk/>

Preventative strategies

Some students may have a number of Facebook 'Friends' who they don't know in real life and this can lead to problems with unwanted posts. Discuss with your students how adding friends you don't know can be dangerous. What are the risks? Explore the reasons around

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being someone's 'Friend' on Facebook. What does this mean? Look at how they may be sharing more information with a Facebook 'Friend' than they do with some of their real life friends.

There are a number of excellent films that highlight the danger of adding 'Friends' that you don't know in real life to social network sites. CEOP have produced two films

Key Stage 2

Jigsaw

<http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/teachers/resources/>

http://www.youtube.com/ceop#p/a/u/0/_o8auwnJtqE

Key Stage 3 / 4

Consequences

<http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/teachers/resources/>

<http://www.youtube.com/ceop#p/a/u/1/hK5OeGeudBM>

You may also like to show the film Ellie's Story from South West Grid for Learning.

<http://www.swgfl.org.uk/Staying-Safe/e-Safety-Movies>

This film shows the dangers of adding people that you don't know in real life to your friends list. It may also be a good idea to raise the issue of adding friends of friends - a popular activity amongst young people who will add a friend of a friend even if they don't know them. Discuss why this may be an issue particularly if their Facebook 'Friends' are not as selective when accepting 'Friend' requests.

The second way of posting on someone's wall is through commenting on an existing wall post.

As with all privacy settings in Facebook this can be set to 'Everyone', 'Friends of Friends', 'Friends Only' or 'Customise'. By default this is set to 'Friends Only', however, as with wall posts, this means that your students can control who can post on their wall very easily through controlling their 'Friends' list.

In instances where the post is part of a wider form of bullying, it is important that the pupil doesn't delete the evidence; however they don't want to leave it on their wall. It is a good idea to teach your pupils how to take a screenshot and save the image and/or print a copy. Once they have taken a copy they should then delete the post.

To take a screenshot you should look for the button on your keyboard that says **Prnt Scrn**, you may need to press the **Fn** key at the same time. You will then need to paste this image into a graphics package or word document.

You should also consider if you need to deal with the issue as part of your schools bullying policy which should have a section that relates specifically to cyberbullying.

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There are a number of sites that can support students with bullying and cyberbullying and you may wish to explore using some of the teaching materials with your students.

<http://www.cybermentors.org.uk/>

<http://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/>

<http://www.stopcyberbullying.org/>

<http://www.digizen.org/resources/cyberbullying/overview/>

Harassment through inbox messages

Typical scenario

A student comes to you and complains that people are sending nasty/upsetting comments to them through the inbox facility on Facebook.

A member of staff is constantly receiving messages from pupils asking about school, homework or for work related advice.

Information

Facebook has a built in private message facility which enables users to send messages to other people registered on the site. The messages appear in the inbox much like email. Depending on your privacy settings it may be that anyone who is registered on the site can send you a message. These messages, while not anonymous, could potentially come from people that the student does not know. It also means that a member of staff could be sent messages from pupils who have found them on Facebook.

Immediate action: Dealing with the message

To report a message you need to select the message in your inbox and click 'Report'. Once you click on the 'Report' button you will be directed to a form. The form also offers the opportunity to block this person to prevent any further inbox messages.

For a member of staff who receives unwanted messages, the easiest solution is to block the student by checking the box. For added security they can change their privacy settings to prevent everyone sending them messages. It is important to note that this will prevent anyone with whom you do not have an existing Facebook connection from sending you messages.

For added security, staff might change their profile picture to one that does not easily identify them which may prevent pupils from finding them on Facebook. For further advice on security settings download our guide: [Using Facebook Safely: A guide for professionals working with young people.](#)

<http://www.yhgfl.net/eSafeguarding/eSafety>

Preventative strategies

If a student receives unwanted messages from someone, they can report the message to Facebook. It is important to remember Facebook will only act if the message is a violation of their [Statement of Rights and Responsibilities](#). In the instance of a teacher receiving unwanted messages from a pupil this does not breach the sites terms and conditions therefore reporting them is not an option.

In instances where the message is part of a wider form of bullying, it is important that the pupil doesn't delete the evidence; however they don't want to leave it in their inbox. It is a good idea to teach your pupils how to take a screenshot and save the image and/or print a copy. Once they have taken a copy, they should, if applicable, report the message and then delete it.

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To take a screenshot you should look for the button on your keyboard that says **Prnt Scrn**, you may need to press the **Fn** key at the same time. You will then need to paste this image into a graphics package or Word document.

You should also consider if you need to deal with the issue as part of your schools bullying policy which should have a section that relates specifically to cyberbullying.

There are a number of sites that can support students with bullying and cyberbullying and you may wish to explore using some of the teaching materials with your students.

You may also like to run some awareness raising sessions with your pupils on cyberbullying. There are a number of short films that can be used to illustrate the impact of cyberbullying and include lesson plans and resources for follow-up work.

www.cybermentors.org

<http://www.digizen.org/>

<http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/resources/educational/lessons/cyberbullying.cfm>

<http://www.beatbullying.org/dox/resources/resources.html>

If your students are particularly concerned that posts are of a sexual or extreme nature, they may also need to report the post to CEOP or the police. This may be particularly relevant if the post is from someone that they do not know in real life. They can do this in a number of ways such as visiting the CEOP website or, via the Facebook app, clicking CEOP. They could also call their local police station directly.

<http://www.facebook.com/?ref=logo#!/clickceop>

<http://www.ceop.police.uk/report-abuse/>

It is important that all of your pupils are aware of the role that CEOP have in protecting them online. You may wish to use the CEOP ThinkUknow presentation with your pupils which illustrates the 'Report Abuse' button and the role of CEOP.

<http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/teachers/resources/>

If a member of staff is receiving unwanted messages from pupils that are generally polite there are a number of actions that can be taken.

Firstly it is important that the member of staff explains to the pupil that Facebook is not an appropriate method of communication. You may like to discuss the staff Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) and highlight the section that relates to pupil/staff communication.

If you have a VLE or school email system you should direct your pupils to use that. However, do ensure that you set clear boundaries in relation to when email will be read and responded to.

Pages that are upsetting or offensive

Typical scenario

You have been made aware of a Facebook Page about your school that contains offensive comments about the school and teachers.

A Page has been set up called like this if you hate..... (Pupil/staff name)

Information

It is relatively easy for anyone to set up a page on Facebook. A page is public and can be seen by anyone, including general internet users who are not registered on Facebook through a unique url. For example..... <http://www.facebook.com/LiverpoolFC>

To like (join) the page you will need to be a registered user of Facebook, however this is not necessary to view the contents of the page such as photos, wall posts, discussion etc.

Facebook pages take a variety of forms from commercial to community and charity pages. A number of colleges and secondary schools have created their own Facebook pages which they manage themselves.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/8299050.stm>

Immediate action: Removing the Page

Firstly you will need to navigate to the page that has been created; you may need to search for it using the search bar.

Once you have found the page scroll down and on the left you will see the option to Report Page. It is important to note that you need to be logged in to report any page. Once you click on the 'Report Page' option you will be directed to another box. You will have to choose from a number of options from a list as to what grounds you are reporting the page on.

It is important to note that Facebook will only remove content that violates its [Statement of Rights and Responsibilities](#). The page will not be deleted immediately and you will not receive any confirmation so you will need to keep checking back. For example, they will not remove a page if it doesn't contain any offensive material. If someone has created a school page and is only discussing nice things it will not be removed. In this instance it is probably a good idea to keep an eye on the page.

Prevention strategies

The incident should be treated as cyberbullying and, as such, it is important that you refer to your school's bullying policy. If the page is aimed at an individual then you should also consider how they will be supported to deal with what may be a very upsetting issue.

As part of a wider approach to tackling cyberbullying, it is important that you ensure that sessions are built in to the curriculum.

There are a number of resources, lesson plans, assemblies and websites that can support you with developing and embedding cyberbullying lessons in the curriculum.

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It is also a good opportunity to tackle the idea of the bystander, for example many pupils may read and share the comments or just add affirmations. In 2009 Anti-Bullying week focused on the role of the bystander and produced some useful resources for schools.

<http://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk>

Cybersmart an American organisation have also produced some lesson resources on the role of the bystander including worksheets and other resources.

<http://cybersmartcurriculum.org/cyberbullying/lessons/>

It is a good opportunity to raise the issue of online content having offline consequences. Share with your students information on the following news story of a young woman who was jailed for bullying another person online.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/hereford/worcs/8215174.stm>

Finally it is also important that pupils understand that online behaviour can be traced. There have been a number of news stories recently about people receiving letters for illegally downloading music, games etc. Pupils need to understand that their online behaviour can be traced and that there are legal powers to enable this.

Students under 13 are using Facebook

Typical Scenarios

Your pupils are falling out over Facebook posts; they are all Primary aged pupils.

A parent has asked for advice about their 10 year old child using Facebook because she has heard that it is for people over 13.

Information

The terms and conditions of Facebook require individuals to be at least 13 years old before they can create an account. The reasons for this relate to laws regarding the collection of personal data of young people. Providing false information to create an account is a violation of Facebook's [Statement of Rights and Responsibilities](#). This includes accounts registered on the behalf of under 13 year old children by older parties. However, in reality, many users under 13 years of age are using Facebook and it's incredibly difficult to help them understand why this is a problem.

Immediate action: Deleting an account

You will need to show your pupils how to delete a Facebook account and ensure they realise the difference between deleted and deactivated.

- Log in to Facebook and select 'Account/Help Centre'
- On the right hand side you should see 'delete account'
- You will then be shown a FAQ page and you will need to click on the link that says 'permanently delete my account'.
- Click 'Submit' and you will then be asked to confirm that you want to delete your account before it will be deleted.
- Alternatively follow this link which will take you directly to the account deletion page
- https://ssl.facebook.com/help/contact.php?show_form=delete_account

NOTE: Facebook will try to discourage you from deleting an account. Deactivating and deleting is not the same thing. If an account is deactivated it still exists and can be activated again at any time by logging in.

It may be that your pupils choose not to delete their accounts. In which case it is also possible to contact Facebook and ask them to delete the account.

If you would like to report an account registered for an underage child, click on the following link:

http://www.facebook.com/help/contact.php?show_form=underage

Facebook state that they will promptly delete the account of any child under the age of 13 that is reported to them through this form.

Prevention strategies

It is important to talk to the pupils about why Facebook has a lower age limit. You might also want to discuss with them the issues around giving false information and lying about age in general. What are the risks? Does it matter if someone thinks you are older than you are?

In an ideal world your students would then delete their account. However in reality this may not happen. Involving parents as part of a wider eSafety approach and sharing the issues with them is useful as they may not fully understand what the problems are and, in some cases, may even have set up the child's account. In this instance it is a good idea to run a session on some of the common Facebook issues such as commercial, privacy and offensive content.

Furthermore it would also be a good idea to show parents that, just because they have added their child as a friend, doesn't mean they can see everything their child is doing. Complex privacy settings mean it is easy to hide some posts, images etc. from parents by using the customise settings. The following resources may help you with running a parents session:

<http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk>

<http://www.childnet.com/safety/parents.aspx>

<http://www.kirklees-ednet.org.uk/subjects/esafety/presentations.htm>

You may wish to consider showing the parents how to set their privacy settings to ensure that they are using Facebook safely or directing them to guidance that shows them how to do this.

The video listed below shows how to set privacy settings to friends only on Facebook.

<http://www.safeshare.tv/v/MTpa3AS39uA>

Problems in Facebook Chat

Typical Scenarios

One of your students is complaining that they are being harassed through the chat facility on Facebook. Whenever they log on a chat box pops up with unpleasant comments.

A pupil has disclosed a secret via Facebook chat and now the whole school knows.

Information

Facebook has a built in 'Chat' facility that allows users to chat in real time with each other. When a user logs in to Facebook it automatically shows which of their friends are also online in a panel on the left-hand side of the screen.

Immediate action: Stopping the chat

The best way to stop any form of harassment through chat is by blocking the person from their 'Friends' list. Blocking will remove them from your 'Friends' list and also ensure that the person will not be able to find you and contact you again via Facebook.

Blocking a 'Friend'

- To block a 'Friend' click on their profile and scroll down to the bottom.
- Underneath their details on the left you will see a number of options. Select 'Report/Block' this person and then check the box that says 'Block this person'.
- You may also report them if you feel that they fit into one of the categories.
- Once you have submitted you will receive a message confirming the block and giving you a link to your privacy settings. It is possible to unblock someone you have previously blocked.

Prevention Strategies

There are two types of chat available within Facebook. 'Chat with Friends' and 'Group Chat', for problems with Group Chat please see the following section.

In individual chat, pupils can choose to chat with a Facebook Friend on a one-to-one basis. This chat appears in a small pop-up box at the bottom of the screen.

It is possible to take screen shots of the chat and using some software you could record the entire conversation as a video file.

It is vital to ensure that your pupils understand that only people they add as friends can contact them through Facebook Chat. You may want to discuss with your pupils the importance of only adding friends that they know in real life. There are a number of dangers related to adding Friends who they do not know. As discussed in the section on unwanted wall posts, CEOP and ThinkUknow have produced a number of short films that can be used to illustrate these dangers.

Key Stage 2

Jigsaw

<http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/teachers/resources/>

http://www.youtube.com/ceop#p/a/u/0/_o8auwnJtqE

Key Stage 3 / 4

Consequences

<http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/teachers/resources/>

<http://www.youtube.com/ceop#p/a/u/1/hK5OeGeudBM>

If the person is someone they know in the real world and a pupil at your school then it may be something that you address within the wider bullying context. There are a number of useful cyberbullying resources that are linked at the end of this document. You may also wish to run some awareness raising sessions with your pupils in relation to cyberbullying and the laws around it.

In instances where the chat comments are part of a wider form of bullying, it is important that the pupil doesn't delete the evidence. It is a good idea to teach your pupils how to take a screenshot and save the image and/or print a copy.

To take a screenshot you should look for the button on your keyboard that says **Prnt Scrn**, you may need to press the **Fn** key at the same time. You will then need to paste this image into a graphics package or word document.

Once you have shown pupils how to do this you may also want to address the issues around privacy. Things that pupils post, write and share online are never truly private and it is important that they understand that they should only share things online or via chat that they would be happy for their teacher, parents or others who are not immediate best friends to see. Many students see online chat as an extension of face-to-face conversation and may not even be aware that chats can be copied or even recorded to be played back later.

Problems with Facebook Group chat

Typical scenarios

A student has told you that they are receiving upsetting/offensive comments in a group of which they are a member.

Information

Facebook Groups are a shared space where members can participate in communal activities like 'Group Chat', email lists, document sharing and group photo-tagging. Groups are closed by default (but can be secret or open) and are designed to be spaces where small groups of friends share information, with each group controlled by the entirety of its members. Once in a group you may receive emails from your group and join a Group Chat session. The chat is in real time and can involve up to 250 members of a group.

Immediate action: Dealing with the chat

The simplest solution would be for the student to leave the group, however they may be reluctant to do this if the issue is only with one person.

To leave a group, firstly navigate to the group via your profile page. Then select 'Leave Group' from the menu on the right of the screen.

If the student wishes to remain in the group they can block the individual involved and report them. Once blocked, the offender will not appear in Facebook Group Chat and the student will not see any messages or posts from them. This doesn't prevent them saying things to the rest of the group so it is not always the best option.

To block a member of a group, navigate to the group and click on the member to see their profile. Once there choose 'Report/Block' from the menu at the bottom of the screen on the left hand side.

Prevention strategies

In this instance it may be that the student is chatting to people through Group Chat that they don't have as a Facebook 'Friend' and the only connection is through a shared interest. It is important that you remind pupils of the dangers of giving out too much personal information online. Some people take great delight in offending others online and it is vital that students realise that, just as in real life, the internet contains a huge number of unpleasant people.

In instances where the chat comments are part of a wider form of bullying, it is important that the pupil doesn't delete the evidence. It is a good idea to teach your pupils how to take a screenshot and save the image and/or print a copy.

To take a screenshot you should look for the button on your keyboard that says **Prnt Scrn**, you may need to press the **Fn** key at the same time. You will then need to paste this image into a graphics package or word document.

Someone has posted a photo of you without your permission.

Typical scenarios

Someone has posted a picture of a member of staff from University days looking worse for wear.

A student has taken a photo of a member of staff without permission and uploaded it to Facebook.

A student has complained that someone has posted manipulated image of them on Facebook.

Students are sharing an image of a girl in your class that they have taken from her profile page.

Information

Facebook is one of the biggest photo-sharing websites, with 60 million photos added weekly to the site. Once a user has uploaded a photo they can then tag friends and share the image with others.

Immediate action: Dealing with the image

If someone you are 'Friends' with has posted a photo of you without your permission, firstly remove yourself from the photo by clicking remove tag. This can be found next to your name at the bottom of the image.

By removing the tag it will stop the picture appearing on your wall and therefore it will not appear to any of your 'Friends' The image will still be on Facebook on the wall of whoever uploaded it.

Next you can ask them to remove the image. This is the simplest way of dealing with the issue. If they won't then you can either delete the person as a friend or customise your privacy settings so that Photos and videos I'm tagged in are set to only me. It is important to note that, unless they remove it, the image will still be available for their 'Friends' to see.

If you are not sure how to change your privacy settings then you may wish to download our guide. Using Facebook Safely: A guide for professionals working with young people.

<http://www.yhgfl.net/eSafeguarding/eSafety>

Whilst this doesn't prevent people tagging you in an image it will ensure that your 'Friends' don't see the images. Unfortunately you cannot stop people sharing images with you in unless they violate the terms of Facebook.

If a photo or video of you violates the terms and conditions of the site you can report it and ask for it to be removed. To do this you will find the option to Report photo at the bottom right of the image.

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As with anything Facebook will only remove images that violate their Terms and Conditions. It is not a violation of their [Statement of Rights and Responsibilities](#) to post a photo that is unflattering, so Facebook will not delete a photo just because you may not like the way you look in it.

It is worth noting that Facebook will remove images of people who are under 13 if requested to do so. However, as they may share your contact details with the user, in most cases it is easier and quicker to speak to the user directly. To request removal of a photograph of a minor follow the link below.

http://www.facebook.com/help/contact.php?show_form=unauthorized_photo_underage

Prevention strategies

It is important that you teach your students that once an image is uploaded to a website they lose control of it. It can be copied, altered reposted and shared with others within minutes. Furthermore, the terms and conditions of Facebook state 'you grant us a non-exclusive, transferable, sub-licensable, royalty-free, worldwide license to use any IP content that you post on or in connection with Facebook'.

This means that it is incredibly important that students think carefully about any images they post to the internet. Once the image is out there, it is impossible to retrieve it.

The issue of photographs on Facebook is an excellent way to introduce pupils to the idea that many people judge others based on first impressions. You may wish to explore a range of images and discuss what they may suggest about the subject.

There are some fantastic examples of manipulated images on the internet and it is certainly worth showing your students just how realistic manipulated images can look.

http://www.anvari.org/cols/Photoshopped_Animals.html

<http://www.1stwebdesigner.com/inspiration/65-very-creative-and-funny-photoshopped-images/>

Discuss with your pupils the moral issues around taking photographs, altering them, and uploading them without the permission of the subject. A photograph that may seem harmless and funny to one person may cause great offence and stress to another. You may also need to remind pupils that such actions could potentially fall in to the category of cyberbullying.

You may also wish to show your students this short film which illustrates the idea that a photo can be copied and shared many times. Choose film 9: Bulletin Board

<http://wn.com/OhioCommissionDRCM>

False profiles of a member of staff or student

Typical Scenarios

A student or member of staff has complained that someone has set up a fake profile and is making malicious comments.

Information

As part of the Statement of Rights and Responsibilities that Facebook has it clearly states:

- 4.1 You will not provide any false personal information on Facebook, or create an account for anyone other than yourself without permission.

This means that anyone who creates a fake profile is in breach of the sites terms and conditions. In this instance it may not be possible to find out who created the fake profile. However, it is a useful way to teach pupils that, just like in real life, the internet has rules and regulations that users are expected to follow. Many people sign up to sites without considering the terms and conditions they are agreeing to.

Immediate action: Removing the profile

- Go to the impostor profile and click 'Report/block this person' at the bottom of the left column.
- Check the 'Report this Person' box, and choose 'Fake Profile' as the reason, and add 'Impersonating me or someone else' as the report type.

The student or member of staff may also need some immediate support depending on the nature of the comments and actions taken through the fake profile. This may include addressing the issue with the whole school to ensure that everyone is aware that the profile is a fake account.

Prevention Strategies

Give your pupils a copy of the Facebook privacy policy and highlight some of the key points that they may not be aware of. What could the issues be?

For example

Section 2: Access Device and Browser Information. 'We may collect information from that device about your browser type, location, and IP address, as well as the pages you visit.'

Section 8: 'We cannot ensure that information you share on Facebook will not become publicly available.'

Remind your pupils of the school anti-bullying policy and how it relates to this specific incident. What are the issues around creating fake profiles? Share the following story with your pupils in which a man was awarded £22,000 in damages from a former friend who set up a fake Facebook account about him. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/7523128.stm>

Students are repeatedly requesting that you become friends with them.

Scenario

A member of staff has registered on Facebook and is receiving 'Friends' requests from students.

Facebook is suggesting that a member of staff adds students as 'Friends'.

Information

When you first register with Facebook it will ask you if you would like to use its 'Friend Finder' facility. This will look through your email address book and then find people who you have emailed in the past or who have emailed you. Using this information and information from your existing 'Friends List' it then gives you a range of suggestions.

This may mean that you receive 'Friends Suggestions' from people who you have had email contact with. Furthermore Facebook also uses information about your existing 'Friends' to suggest people you may know. Facebook also has the facility to search for people by name or email address and then send them a 'Friend Request'.

Immediate action: Dealing with and preventing requests

When registering for Facebook ensure that you use an email address that is not school related, this will ensure that it doesn't keep suggesting you add pupils or that pupils add you.

Ensure that your privacy settings are set to 'Friends Only' as this will prevent any pupils from seeing the content of your account. It is also a good idea to hide your 'Friends' list so that pupils will not be able to read any content you have posted on friends' walls who may not have set their privacy settings appropriately.

Think carefully about your profile picture. You may want to choose an image that is not easily identifiable as you. This will help to prevent students looking to add you.

There will always be a small number of students who will look to add you. Current best practice recommends that you do not 'Friend' current students on Facebook. Think carefully about why you would want to share family photos and other personal information with your pupils. If you do choose to use social networking with your pupils, then first consider if your VLE has any facilities that you can utilise and consider setting up a separate work Facebook account. Using online technologies can be exciting and motivating; however it is vital that you have clear boundaries and rules for all users.

When you receive requests from students you should ignore the request rather than sending a detailed explanation. If an individual pupil is repeatedly 'Friending' you, then you may find it useful to politely explain to them in a face-to-face situation that you are unable to accept their request and, for added peace of mind, you may wish to inform a member of your Senior Leadership Team of the problem. It may also be worthwhile considering if any of your school policies cover this issue.

Prevention strategies

It is vital that all staff are aware of any policies in relation to contact with students via online communication. Many schools have a policy that states that staff must not be 'Friends' with students on social networking sites. Current guidance and best practice supports this.

Discuss with students why it is not appropriate to communicate via Facebook and if possible give them an alternative form of communication such as a school email address or through a VLE.

Students have been posting nasty comments about a member of staff or another student.

Typical scenarios

A parent has informed you that she has seen some unpleasant comments about a member of staff on the wall of a student who is friends with their child.

A student has informed you that some girls in your class have been posting rude comments about you and saying upsetting things in Facebook chat.

Information

Many young people see Facebook as an essential part of their daily lives and use it to communicate with friends in the same way that people use telephone calls or face-to-face chat. This can lead to students treating Facebook communications in the same way they would a private conversation where they might share worries, complaints and comments without realising that they are broadcasting this to a much wider audience.

Immediate action: Dealing with the comments

Speak to the students involved and explain that behaviour online is not the same as a private conversation. Explain to the students that any disparaging statement made by one person about another, which is communicated or 'published', may well be a defamatory statement, and can give rise to an action for either libel or slander in English law. You may also need to refer to your schools discipline policy for any further action.

Prevention strategies

Explore with your students the idea that nothing said online is ever truly private as it can be easily copied and shared and this includes conversations through chat.

This film from the Adcouncil in America highlights the idea that if you wouldn't say it in person you shouldn't say it online.

<http://www.safeshare.tv/v/bdQBurXQOeQ>

Depending on the age of the students, you may wish to explore the legal aspects of defamation of character and slander or libel.

As part of your general ICT/eSafety training it is useful to teach students how to take screenshots. This will then help when they see something upsetting online. For example a group of girls were being rude about another student on their Facebook pages.

Useful links

eSafety films

- A range of films from America covering different aspects of eSafety
<http://wn.com/OhioCommissionDRCM>
- CEOP have a channel on YouTube aimed at sharing some of their films with a wider audience including Jigsaw and Consequences.
<http://www.youtube.com/ceop>
- A series of films created by the South West Grid for Learning (SWGfL) to highlight some common eSafety issues
<http://www.swgfl.org.uk/Staying-Safe/e-Safety-Movies>

Teaching resources

- A range of resources from CEOP including lesson plans, assembly scripts and presentations for parents.
<http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>
- A template for creating Facebook profile pages in PowerPoint
<http://techtoolsforschools.blogspot.com/2010/01/facebook-project-template.html>

Websites for students/parents

- Childnet Skills School with tutorials on Facebook privacy settings, searching and photo settings
<http://www.kidsmart.org.uk/skills-school/>
- A guide from Connect aimed at Parents. It's designed to help them understand what Facebook is and how to use it safely.
<http://www.connectsafely.org/Safety-Advice-Articles/facebook-for-parents.html>
- Social Times Inc Advice on 10 Facebook Privacy settings. Latest version here
<http://www.wracassociation.co.uk/Files/facebook-privacy.pdf>