

Facebook



for School Communication

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Contact Details

Web: www.esafety-adviser.com

Email: support@esafety-adviser.com

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Introduction

Social media is a fantastic way of engaging with your parents and school community for a number of good reasons such as:

- It's free.
- It's easy.
- It's likely a large number of your parents are using social media.

It's a fact that 'online' increasingly means 'mobile'; the days of people visiting your website for useful information is diminishing. People increasingly expect information to be fed to them rather than having to go and look for it.

Think of it this way, you've spent a lot of money on a wonderful-looking website with tons of information. Who is visiting your website? What are they looking at? Your page counter (if you have one) may say that you've had 10,000 hits in the last month, but who were these visitors?



Questions and answers

But social media isn't for everyone. One of the biggest hurdles you will likely come across is staff buy-in, particularly those members of staff who have never used social media, and this is probably because of all the bad things they have heard. It's a classic case of where we concentrate on the bad without balancing the enormous amount of good that can be done.

Sure, there have been some horror stories in the press, but these are rare, and the huge majority of schools I have visited that are using social media as a way to engage parents wouldn't look back.

It's important that staff are onboard with this and so I would strongly recommend you have an open discussion as to your reasons for using social media.

Some of the questions you may get asked are in the table on the following page. I offer a few answers based on my own opinion but as with anything subjective, opinions will vary.

If you don't give it a try, how will you ever know?



Questions	Answers
<p>What are we going to use this for?</p> <p>What are the outcomes?</p>	<p>To positively promote our school to the community and also potential new parents.</p> <p>To engage more with parents, particularly those hard-to-reach parents.</p> <p>To get messages out in a timely manner.</p> <p>To share events and announcements.</p> <p>To celebrate the work of students and our school as a whole.</p> <p>To share resources, advice and guidance with parents about particular aspects of education, e.g. e-safety advice.</p>
<p>Could this be seen as promoting social media to underage users?</p> <p>I've heard there are so many bad people on Facebook, why would we want to do this?</p>	<p>No, social media is a communication tool that you are going to use to engage with the school community, not your students, although if you're in a secondary school why not consider this?</p> <p>Facebook has approximately 1.6 billion users, a small number of those will be bad people much the same as in the real world. Don't let the small element of bad undermine the enormous amount of good that can be done.</p>
<p>Isn't it technically difficult and takes a long time to administer?</p>	<p>The basics are really easy and take minutes. Put it this way (and this isn't meant to sound controversial), if young children are creating accounts and using social media, how difficult can it be? Contrary to popular belief, children are not 'expert' users.</p>
<p>There are too many idiots or it's too much of a risk getting negative or derogatory comments.</p>	<p>The Page can be locked down to disallow people 'posting' to your Page, but you can't stop others 'commenting' on your posts. In my experience derogatory comments are rare but when they do happen they're normally drowned out by positive comments from other parents.</p> <p>Make it clear to parents in your initial communication that negativity will not be tolerated and will be dealt with in the same way as if it was face-to-face.</p>
<p>Will it take a long time to post and schedule updates?</p>	<p>No, basic text updates take seconds, at most an update will take a minute or two.</p>
<p>Will we be posting pictures/videos of the children? If so, how will this be managed? Isn't this dangerous?</p>	<p>This is a school (SLT/Governor) choice and should fit in with your school photographic/media policy. It's no more dangerous than children having their photograph in the media (bearing in mind much of the media is online these days) and you will already have a process in place for excluding at-risk children or parents who have denied permission; the process for posting to social media is no different. One consideration you may like to have is to resubmit the 'permission-slip' to parents and ensure there is a 'social media' tick box, but also have a letter of explanation too.</p>
<p>Can a Facebook Page be made 'private' so that we only allow our parents in?</p>	<p>No, you would need to set up a Facebook Group. The setup is much the same and the day-to-day use is similar.</p>

Before you Start

There are some important considerations before you embark on this initiative:

Ensure SLT/Governor buy-in before you start anything.

Ensure you have agreed policy statements in place. There is no requirement for a separate social media policy (although there's nothing wrong with this), statements can quite easily go into your e-safety policy.

Policy statements should cover:

The reason or purpose for the social media presence.

Who is the lead or who is allowed to post (I recommend starting off with one person).

A statement covering how derogatory/inappropriate comments will be dealt with, e.g. 'any inappropriate comments or activity by parents or other persons will be dealt with in the same manner as if it was face-to-face. Any inappropriate activity by members of school staff will be dealt with in accordance with the staff code of conduct policy.'

Ensure you have a statement which makes clear that photos/videos will only be posted in accordance with the school photographic/media policy (check – you may need to amend your policy).

Ensure you can get to Facebook through your internet filter. If not get your IT support to 'white-list' Facebook, open up Facebook to the named member of staff or all staff (different filters and network configurations will determine your options).

ALWAYS REMEMBER

- Safeguarding and Child Protection
- Data protection.

What is a Facebook Page?

In the words of Facebook, “Pages are for businesses, brands and organizations to share their stories and connect with people. Like profiles, you can customize Pages by publishing stories, hosting events, adding apps and more. People who like your Page and their friends can get updates in their News Feed.”

In my words, it is a ‘free, easy and effective tool to celebrate the successes of your school, sharing your stories, engaging with your school community and posting information that parents and carers will find useful.’

It’s an addition to your current school communications (not a replacement) in order to promote positive engagement.



Image: www.facebook.com/esafetyadviser

Facebook Page or Group?

You may have heard of Facebook Pages and Groups; although they are set up in a very similar way, there are some differences:

Privacy:

The information on a Facebook Page is public, whereas a Group can be locked down; the options are Public, Closed (anyone can ask to join) or Secret.

Audience:

Anyone can 'Like' a Page to connect with it and there is no limitation on the amount of people that can Like the Page. A Facebook Page is essentially like an organizational timeline. In Groups, because you can lock the Group down you can choose who you allow/don't allow in.

Communication:

In a Page, anybody that has 'liked' your page will potentially see your post. I say potentially because Facebook works using algorithms and will choose for you if/when people see your post. This can be frustrating but if you have important information all you have to do is schedule the post more than once to give a greater chance of people seeing it. In Groups, everybody gets notified that a post has been made. Additionally within Groups, members can participate in chats, upload photos to shared albums and collaborate in group documents.

There are a number of other differences, such as within a Page you have 'Insights' which helps track which of your posts are being seen the most (think impact), the ability to schedule posts and much more. Groups are more like discussion forums, for a example a great use of a Facebook Group would be the PTA. I have personally used Facebook Groups to privately organize large projects with groups of schools where we could share thoughts, discussions, documents etc.

My personal opinion – whilst Groups look good, particularly in regards to the privacy settings, I would go for a Facebook Page as you have more features available to you. If you're not certain, have a play around with both, there's no need to rush into anything.

Creating your FB Profile

You have to have a personal profile in order to create a Page. It's a little frustrating, but that's the way Facebook works.

If you have a personal profile already you can skip this step and go to the section 'Creating your first Facebook Page'. Don't worry about this step, your personal information won't appear on your school page unless you choose to add it. When people look at your school Page, they won't be able to associate it to your personal profile.

1. Using your web browser, go to www.facebook.com
2. Fill in the required details:
 - Note: Facebook operates a 'real-name' policy. If you don't use your real name you run the risk of your profile (and any associated Pages) being deleted.
3. I recommend using your personal email address – keep your personal profile personal.
4. Click on 'Sign Up'. You will then be taken through the steps to start filling in your profile.
5. If you're only creating this profile in order to use Facebook Pages, just fill in some basic details.
6. You will receive an email asking you to confirm your email address. Just click on the link in the email and the confirmation will be complete.
7. This is a good time to go through the privacy settings to make sure your personal information is nicely locked down, they're all self-explanatory.



Deactivating your Profile

If it's all too much or you're just not interested anymore, there are two things you can do: deactivate or delete.

Deactivate is exactly that, it suspends your profile indefinitely; your data won't be viewable by anyone else until you re-activate.

To deactivate:

1. Go to your personal profile and click on the blue arrow, click '**Settings**' then click on '**Security**'.
2. At the bottom, click on '**Deactivate your account**', and follow the prompts.

Deleting does exactly what it says on the tin.

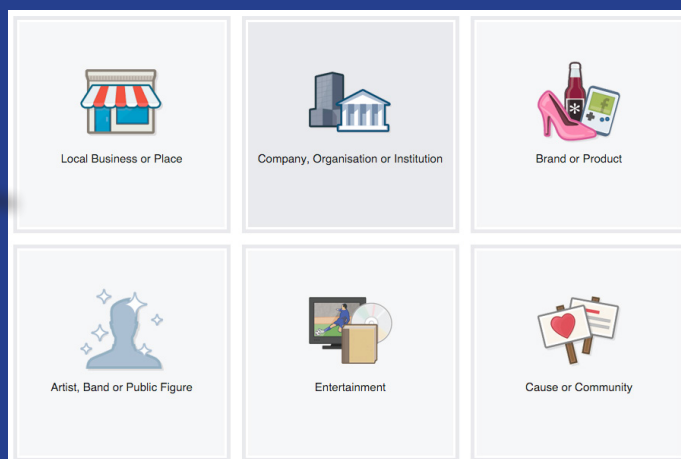
To delete:

Navigate to the following page and follow the instructions:

https://www.facebook.com/help/delete_account

Creating your First Page

1. Log into your personal profile.
2. At the top right of the web page on the blue bar, you will see a padlock. To the right of this there is a 'down' arrow. Click on this then click on 'Create Page.'
3. Click on 'Company, Organisation or Institution.'
4. Under the 'Choose a category' tab, select 'School'
5. In the 'Company Name' box, type in the name of your school.
6. There are over 1.5 billion profiles on Facebook, it is possible that your school name is already being used so you may have to be a little inventive.
7. Click 'Get Started'



Company, Organisation or Institution

Join your supporters on Facebook.

Choose a category

Company name

By clicking Get Started, you agree to the Facebook Pages Terms.

Get Started

Setting up your Page

Your Page has been created, now it's just a matter of filling in some details. All the individual sections can be re-done at any time if you make a mistake or wish to change anything in the future.

1. In the '**About**' section you need to tell people what your Page is about; you only have 155 characters of text, so keep it short and sweet. For example: St. Peter's Primary School is a small rural school in the community of Lincolnshire.
2. Underneath your description, fill in your school website details.
3. Click '**Save Info**'.
4. Next you have the **Profile Picture**. I recommend you use your school logo. If you don't have it to hand you can always 'Skip' and upload at a later date.
5. Click '**Save Photo**' (or **Skip** if you haven't got a usable graphic to hand).
6. On the next part, you can add your Page to your favourites. This means that you can easily access your Page from your personal profile. You can either add to your favourites or skip, it makes little difference as we'll see later.
7. The final part in this section is '**Preferred Page Audience**'. This is used for businesses that want to target particular geographic areas etc. You can simply skip this section as it's of no use to you.

That's it, you have now set up your Page. Facebook will now take you through some of the common functions:

1. The first tab simply indicates where your Page can be managed from.
2. The second tab is an important one and comes down to personal choice:
 - a. If you press '**Like**', others will be able to see that you are associated with the Page/school (dependent on the privacy settings on your personal profile), otherwise press 'Skip'. Until you're comfortable, I recommend you skip.



Set up The Amazing School

1 About

2 Profile Picture

3 Add to Favourites

4 Preferred Page Audience

Tip: Add a description and website to improve the ranking of your Page in search.

Fields marked by asterisks (*) are required.

Add a few sentences to tell people what your Page is about. This will help it show up in the right search results. You will be able to add more details later from your Page settings.

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*Tell people what your Page is about...

Website (e.g. your website, Instagram, Twitter or other social media links)

Need help?

Skip

Save Info

Your first Post

Let's jump straight in and create a post. Don't deliberate too long on what to post, this is just a small exercise to show you how easy it is, but also to show you an important part of posting. The post can be deleted after you have posted it if you wish:

1. Before you post anything, this step is really important. Remember that your Page is associated with your personal profile. You don't want to post as yourself, you will want to post as your Page title.
2. At the top right, you will see **Settings**. Click on this and then select **Post Attribution**. Ensure that '**Post as (...your Page name)**' is selected. By taking this step, anybody that sees this post will not be able to associate your personal profile with the school Page, you are simply posting as 'the school'.
3. Now go back to your page. In the box where it says **Write something....**, this is where you write your posts and updates. Write something simple in this box, it doesn't matter what it is, and then press the **Publish** button.
4. That's it, you've just posted your first update. Nobody is going to see it as you don't yet have any 'Likes' on your Page so we can go ahead and just delete it.
5. To delete your post (and you can do this at any time), look for the little grey 'down' arrow to the top right of your post, click on it then click **Delete**. That's it, gone.



Page Messages Notifications Insights Publishing Tools **Settings**

⚙ General

💬 Messaging

🚩 **Post Attribution**

🌐 Notifications

👤 Page Roles

Post Attribution

☒ **Post as Internet Safety for Parents and Teachers**
Your posts, likes and comments on this Page's timeline will be attributed to the Page by default. When you're creating or replying to a post, you will still have the option to post as yourself or as another Page that you manage.

☐ **Post as Alan MacKenzie**
Your posts, likes and comments on this Page's timeline will be attributed to you by default. When you're creating or replying to a post, you will still have the option to post as this Page or as another Page that you manage.

**internet safety**



Internet Safety for Parents
Community for Parents and Children

**internet safety**

Timeline About Photos Email Signup More ▾

 933 likes +1 this week

 Post reach of 901 this week

 Status  Photo/Video  Offer, Event+ 

 Write something...

Important Settings

Now you've seen how easy it is to post, we need to go through some important settings.

Although there are lots of settings within Facebook, they're all pretty simple. In this section we're going to be looking at the settings that are appropriate for a school environment. Whilst I will recommend these settings, the choice comes down to your school preferences.

1. Look at the top right of your page and you'll see 'Settings'. Click on this. Don't gasp in horror at what you're presented with, the settings are pretty basic.
2. Firstly, you're in the 'General' tab, and to the right you can see the individual settings such as favourites, page visibility, visitor posts etc. Most of these options we're going to be missing out as they're not needed for our purposes.
3. Click on 'Page Visibility'. Here you will see an option to 'Unpublish Page'. If you want to delay your page being visible whilst you spruce it up with nice graphics and information you can do so here.
4. Next click on 'Visitor Posts'. You've got two options here, 'Allow' or 'Disable'. Personally I would recommend disabling for a while or until you get comfortable with Facebook. Once you're happy to allow, I don't recommend allowing photo and video posts, but I do recommend reviewing posts. Once you're happy with your selection click 'Save Changes'.
5. Scroll down to 'Messages'. I recommend you don't allow this. If people want to contact you they should do it the official way. With that said I have visited schools that do allow this and have had no problems.
6. Next we have 'Tagging Ability'. I wouldn't allow this, you don't want others tagging (naming) people on photos.
7. Go further down to 'Age Restrictions'. We know that users need to be aged 13+, but we also realistically know this isn't always the case. I would set the restriction to 18 and over, although this is no guarantee of somebody lying about their date of birth.



8. Next we have '**Profanity Filter**'. If you've got comments switched off this setting won't make any difference, however it's worth setting this to '**Medium**' or '**Strong**' while you're here.
9. At the bottom we have '**Remove Page**'. If you ever get to that point where you just don't want this page any more, you can delete the Page from here. Note that it doesn't have any effect on your personal profile, just the Page. (Note: If you decide to delete the page, it can take up to 14 days for everything to be deleted).
10. On the left-hand tabs, go down to '**Notifications**'. Here you can set when (or if) you get any notifications when there is activity on your Page. Set your own personal preferences but I don't recommend you switch '**Text Messages**' on.
11. Now go down to '**Page Roles**'. You can set up other staff in your school as Page Admins or Editors. This effectively allows those members of staff to post on behalf of the school. Frustratingly that user also needs to have a Facebook profile; just enter their email address and they will be notified (or invited). To see an explanation of the roles, click on the down arrow underneath '**Specify an email address**' and click on **Admin**, **Editor** or **Moderator**, you will then see the explanation.

(Note: at the time of writing Facebook has changed the way in which this works. Previously you had to be a 'Friend' (on your personal profiles) in order to invite another admin, however this has changed although there are lots of complaints that this isn't working properly. If it doesn't work for you, ensure you are 'Friends' with the other person and then try again).

Posting Links to Websites



Let's get a bit more creative with what we're posting.

We've already posted a basic text update, now let's look at posting a reference to a web page.

This can be really useful, for example you may have a new policy on your own website or a 'Headteacher Update', it could be a link to the school term dates or even a local news story that you would like to bring to the attention of parents.

1. Navigate to your school Home page in your web browser.
2. Copy the web address in the address bar.
3. Go back to your Facebook Page. Type in an update, for example, "We've had a wonderful new website built, please have a look and let us know what you think."
4. Now paste the link that you copied straight after the text you've just entered. You will see that Facebook links to the content. If there are any pictures on the page that you linked to it will show up and will also allow you to choose a different picture if there is more than one. You can also upload an image if you prefer to use something else.
5. To tidy the text up a little, you can now delete the link that you pasted. Facebook has already made the link so it isn't needed anymore.
6. Once you've finished you have a couple of options. You can '**Save Draft**' to edit at a later time, you can '**Schedule**' for a future date (really useful if you're doing a week or months worth of updates) or you can '**Publish**' straight away.
7. If you ever need to edit or delete a post, in the update window click on the small arrow that points downwards and you will see the option to edit or delete.

Posting YouTube Videos

Now let's publish a YouTube video.

Let's pretend that a parent has come into school and asked for a little bit of advice in regards to using Google search more effectively.

You remember seeing a video about this on YouTube and you realise that if one parent is asking, the likelihood is that other parents may find the information useful too. So you tell that parent that you will find a good video on YouTube and post the link on Facebook.



1. In your web browser, go to www.youtube.com
2. In the search bar, type 'Alan Mackenzie esafety adviser' (a bit of shameless promotion!)
3. Have a look down the videos and find the right one ([Using Search – The Basics](#)) and click on the video. It will start playing automatically so just pause the video.
4. In the browser address bar, copy the address.
5. Go back to your Facebook Page and type the update e.g., 'Here's a YouTube video showing you how to search more effectively.'
6. Paste the web address you copied and wait a couple of seconds for Facebook to link to it. Once it has linked you can delete the web address that you pasted.
7. Click 'Publish' or 'Schedule' the post.

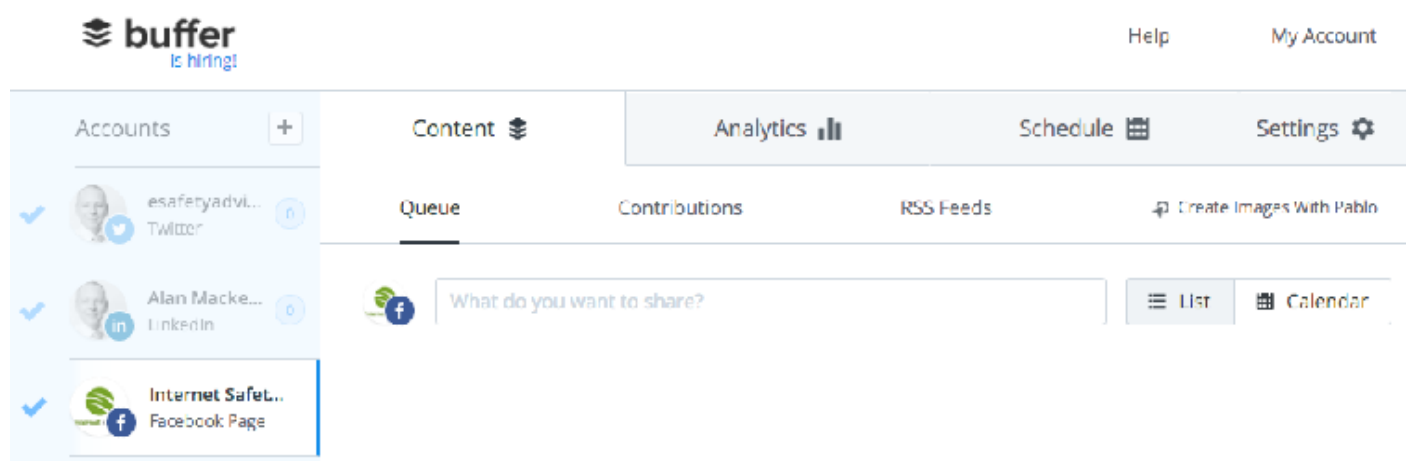
Scheduling Posts

This is a simple but really good way to schedule future events.

For example you could schedule a simple post saying, “Don’t forget the Xmas play will be held on 12th December, tickets are available from reception”, “Don’t forget children will return to school on 4th Sept and Y6 will be going on the zoo trip, remind them they need to bring lunch and a snack.”

The easiest way when posting an update is to click on the white down-arrow next to ‘Publish’ and click ‘Schedule’. You will see that you can enter a particular time and date.

Another way of scheduling, particularly if you have more than one social media account, is to use a free service such as **Buffer** (www.buffer.com). You can sign up for a free account, and it’s that easy it doesn’t need any explanation. Simply connect your social media accounts to Buffer and schedule away. The beauty of using a service such as Buffer is that you can get detailed statistics of your most popular posts etc. There are plenty of other free services out there (such as Hootsuite) but I like Buffer due to its simplicity.



Creating an Event

Events are really useful, for example a school trip, the Xmas disco or other school events.

To post an Event:

1. On the Status bar where it says, 'Status – Photo/Video – Event, Milestone' click on **Event, Milestone**
2. Click on **Event**
3. As you can see you can add a nice photo for the event if you want to. I would recommend you do as the visual aspect makes it a little more appealing.
4. Add an event name.
5. Add a location if you want to.
6. Add a date and time and add an end time if it's applicable.
7. It's doubtful you will sell tickets so you can skip past this. If you do want to sell tickets you would have to use a service such as Eventbrite (www.eventbrite.com).
8. Add a description of the event.
9. The tick box at the bottom (only hosts can post on the event wall) is up to you if you want to allow questions/comments.
10. Click **Publish**. You will be taken to the Event page to see what it looks like. If you go to your Page Home, look down the left sidebar for 'Upcoming Events' and you'll see your newly created event which others will be able to see.

Tips for Posting

- Post regularly, even if it isn't about the school. Regular posting will keep your parents interested (remember the old saying: out of sight, out of mind).
- Facebook works using algorithms. This means that not everyone who 'likes' your Page will always see your post, it depends on lots of different factors. If you have important information, post it on a couple of different days at different times (use the 'Schedule' option). This increases the likelihood of your parents seeing the post.
- Where possible use an image or video, 'visual' posts get far greater engagement, parents are more likely to stop and read.
- Be upbeat, promote the positives of your school regularly, celebrate your successes.



Cross-Posting to Twitter

Some schools choose to use Facebook and Twitter together to reach as many parents as possible.

Although both Facebook and Twitter have settings to allow you to do this, they're not completely reliable.

Instead, I would recommend you use one of two options that are really easy (and free) and much more reliable. I'm not going to go into any detail here as they are both very easy to use.

Use Hootsuite – you can access Hootsuite on the web (www.hootsuite.com), connect to your social media feeds and control them all from there including updates, scheduled updates etc. You can also download the Hootsuite app onto your device such as Android, iPhone or iPad, the functionality is the same.

Use Buffer – this is incredibly easy to use (it's self-explanatory).

Simply browse to the site (www.buffer.com) and sign in with your profile.

Connect your other social media profiles if you have more than one.



Example Letter to Parents

Here is an example of a letter that you can send to your parents.

Dear Parent/Carer,

We are considering creating an online school presence using Facebook or Twitter, or even a combination of both, and we're interested in your feedback.

Why do we want to do this?

- The children do so many great things in school and much of this you don't get to see or hear about. We would love to be able to share photos and videos of things happening on the day in school.
- We want to make our communications more timely and share more with you.
- It's a useful way to share important information with you, such as school closure due to bad weather.
- Sometimes we update information on our website, so we want a better way to inform you of this.
- It's a great way to share other important information and links with you that wouldn't normally be a part of our standard letters or termly newsletter.

On the reverse of this letter are some common questions and answers, but if you have a particular question or concern please let us know at the school office, but in the meantime we would be really grateful if you could fill in the tear-off slip and hand it in to us.

Your Sincerely,

Headteacher



Common Questions and Answers

Will you be posting videos and photos of the children?

- Only where we have previously been given parental permission to do so. If you're not sure what permissions you have given, or wish to change these permissions let us know at the school office.

Will we be able to make comments on posts?

- Yes you will be able to comment on individual posts. We would ask you to be respectful if you do comment. Any comments containing profanity or derogatory remarks will be removed. If you have a concern regarding a post you should contact us in the usual way.

Won't this open up the school or staff to abuse?

- We would rather be completely open, and hope that parents respect what we are trying to do.

Will we be able to post photos/videos of the children, or tag children within Facebook?

- No, in the interests of privacy and protecting children these functions will not be available.

Final Word – by Alan Mackenzie



I really hope you find this guide to be of some use. There is far more to Facebook such as polls, surveys and other things but you'll find that once you get used to the basics you will want to explore further; there is tons of information on the internet to help you with this and perhaps in the future I may write an addendum to this guide going into some of the other functionality.

Some may question why I've written such a guide when there is so much 'bad' out there. Those who have seen/heard me speak know that I try to remain positive and pragmatic; I have been accused in the past of 'promoting predators' when talking about social media use in school. Those sorts of comments come with the territory and are largely founded on assumption rather than fact. The point is, if you don't try you'll never know; for most schools it will be brilliant, for a small minority it won't. If you try and still find it too much, just press the delete key, simple.

In the meantime, please let me know what you think of the guide, or if you've found any errors or confusing statements, and don't forget there are plenty more free resources on my website including questionnaires, newsletters for your staff and parents and much more.

Alan Mackenzie

www.esafety-adviser.com



