

Twitter Account Guidance

Academic Year 2022-2025



What to Consider when Setting Up an Official Twitter Account

Please note: This guidance is not exhaustive and is intended to support schools in making informed decisions.

Twitter is a social networking and micro-blogging site where users can send short messages, called 'Tweets'. Tweets can also contain media like photos or videos.

Users can be "followed" by other users. Users can choose to follow anyone, and anyone can choose to follow them unless they restrict access. Once users send a tweet, it immediately appears on their home page, on their followers' pages, and can be searched on Twitter and beyond.

Educational settings can use Twitter to highlight their own news and events but can also follow other local educational settings, local organisations, other educators, famous authors, and individuals. Further information about setting up a Twitter account can be found here:

<https://business.twitter.com/en/basics/create-a-twitter-business-profile.html>

Twitter's help section also has advice here: <https://support.twitter.com/>

Why would a school want a Twitter account?

- A Twitter account can be a useful and free way of publicising your school and promoting activities and useful information
- Twitter accounts can be quick and easy to set up and can have significant benefits for learning, communication, engagement, and participation
- Twitter enables you to go to where your parents are many parents rarely check your official website, but may engage with their Twitter account more frequently – it's a good way of linking to information you want them to be aware of
- By creating an official Twitter account then your school will have more control over its digital reputation
- Advertising - prospective parents may search for your school within Twitter and you will want the top search result to be the 'official' account!
- It is important to note that information on a Twitter account should also be available elsewhere online e.g., school website, learning platform, newsletter etc.

What can a Twitter account offer your school?

- Sharing:
 - Sharing links to your website or learning platform
 - Sharing links to information for parents
 - Sharing information about what's happening at your school
- Consultation:
 - Schools can use Twitter accounts for gathering information e.g., by using polls. They are simple to set up and can give you quick data on key issues
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- Creating an official web presence:
 - The school can take ownership of its online identity and maintain an official online presence which is easier to manage than unofficial pages or content
 - Linking with existing social networks e.g. official Facebook pages can make it easier to manage a Twitter – content can be published from the Facebook page directly onto Twitter.

- Engagement:
 - Schools can use Twitter accounts to engage with local and national events, such as Safer Internet Day or anti-bullying week
 - Twitter can be used to build up local networks with other educational settings and local businesses
 - They can be used to create learning opportunities such as “following” and engaging with popular authors’, education figures or other important agencies or individuals

What are some of the risks of having an official Twitter account?

By default, Twitter accounts are public, and the account can be followed and have their tweets shared, viewed and copied by anyone. *(However, you can o restrict your Twitter account.) When someone ‘follows you’ they see your tweets in their timeline. The purpose of Twitter is to “create and share ideas and information instantly, without barriers”.*

- All content posted must therefore always be appropriate for a worldwide audience and have appropriate parental consent etc
- Other users could post inappropriate comments or pictures for example spam selling/promoting products or threats to members of the community
- Children, parents, or staff could be identified as members of the school and could be placed at risk of harm or harassment
- Underage children (12 or under) could “follow” the account
- The page could be hacked and manipulated
- Admins could post content which breaches confidentiality or places children or other members of the community at risk
- The school could be subjected to tweets which complain about the school or to harass members of the community

What do you need to consider before setting up a Twitter account?

- Be clear about your aims and objectives – know why you want to set up a Twitter account and how it will benefit your school/setting
 - How will you know if this has been achieved? For example, it will be classed as successful if 25% of parents follow the account?
- Start with consulting with your own community
 - Consider if there is demand for Twitter. For example, if parents do not use Twitter, then there is little point in setting it up
 - Consider what other options are available and how it can complement existing communication channels
- Complete a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) risk assessment to identify possible hazards and what action can be undertaken to reduce possible concerns
- Ensure that leaders and managers are engaged with the page and that all members of staff are following appropriate policies e.g., the Acceptable Use, e-Safety and data protection policy
- Choose your school’s Twitter ID carefully because you can’t change the name once you’ve selected it (Your school’s Twitter ID will be limited to 15 characters)
- As you select a name think of your branding and how you want your school to be known. If your formal school’s name is longer than 15 characters is there a shorter name or nickname your school is known by. Your school’s name may have already been used by another school, so you may have to compromise
- It’s recommended that you don’t use any special characters or spaces, but this may be necessary if another account has already been created with the name you desire

- Consider trialling the account with a class or a year group before whole-school rollout e.g., ‘XXXX School Year 6 Parents Twitter account’. This will help bring out any issues around content, privacy, or settings

Who should be the Administrators of an official Twitter account?

- The school will need to set up an official and specific Twitter account
- Consider if one Twitter account is sufficient – this is likely to be fine for an early year setting or primary school, but a college or secondary school may wish to have official accounts for different departments
- It is advisable that the main admin for the Twitter is a member of the leadership or in a responsible role that can be accountable for what is uploaded
- In some cases, it will be appropriate to have more than one admin, as content should be updated regularly and followers etc. may need to be checked to ensure they are suitable. Sufficient time will need to be allocated to allow this and schools will need to consider how this can be managed
- The school will need to ensure that any admins have agreed an appropriate acceptable use agreement and have accessed sufficient training to enable them to manage the Twitter account(s) successfully. Admins must be always professional and be aware that they are an ambassador for the school
- The school will need to consider how admins will access and manage the account e.g., will they have a school provided device
- It won’t be appropriate for members of staff to use their personal devices if they are uploading photos of children so they school will need to provide appropriate resources and access
- Ensure the admins use a strong password which is only available to the admin and the leadership or management team to reduce the risk of the site being hacked

What are the privacy options for a Twitter account?

- Twitter accounts are public by default. If Tweets are public then schools need to be aware that everyone (not just twitter users) can see their tweets, anyone can retweet them and anyone can choose to follow them
- Users can choose to restrict their account which means that Tweets will only be seen by approved followers who have been accepted onto their following list.
- This gives schools control over who can see their content. Many schools choose this approach initially to begin to understand how Twitter operates etc.
- Some schools only accept followers once they have received additional verification from the user to ensure they are known members of the community, such as an email to the school office with their name and their Twitter name. This reduces risks of unknown people viewing content. It does require administration work and schools will need to regularly review the account to approve or reject request and to remove users once they are no longer members of the school community
- Restricted tweets will not appear in any searches. This can be a downside if the educational setting wishes to engage in a wider debate such as sharing pupils learning in relation to national events

Can we involve children aged 12 or under in using an official Twitter account?

- Twitter’s age limit is for children aged 13 and over, so it is inappropriate to use an official Twitter account to directly communicate or inform children under 13

“Our Services are not directed to persons under 13. If you become aware that your child has provided us with personal information without your consent, please contact us at privacy@twitter.com. We do not knowingly collect personal information from children under 13. If we become aware that a child under 13 has provided us with personal information, we take steps to remove such information and terminate

the child's account. You can find additional resources for parents and teens here.” A school could potentially use Twitter for class accounts and under 13s could be supervised to contribute to these

- When engaging with children aged 13+ then schools will need to appropriately assess the decision, considering benefits and risks. Schools will need to demonstrate that all reasonable precautions have been taken to reduce the risks of children being identified.
- Schools will also need to ensure that information can be accessed in other ways e.g., Facebook, school website or learning platform for those not wishing to engage with Twitter

Can we share photographs and videos on the official Twitter account?

- Photos of school activity can be a good way of sharing events and information with parents, students, and staff
- Schools should also consider storing the photos in a more secure location e.g., the official website or learning platform, and then linking to them from the Twitter account
- Admins must ensure that they adhere to the policy on publishing children’s photos e.g., no names of children published and ensure children are appropriately clothed
- Schools should ensure that image consent forms are up-to-date and cover the use of social media

What should we avoid posting on an official Twitter account?

- Admins must not disclose information, make commitments, or engage in activities on behalf of the school unless they are authorised to do so
- Admins should avoid mentioning specific details when discussing trips and events etc. as there may be child protection issues around revealing where children or staff are going to be and when
- Leaders must ensure there is a clear procedure for admins to follow if there is a concern, for example reporting to the Designated Safeguarding Lead
- Admins should not engage in public debates if opinions or concerns are raised or respond to negativity aimed at the school
- Admins should be cautious when deleting comments unless they contain credible threats or offensive comments. Opportunities to engage with parents/carers and demonstrate that the school listens to the community might be missed if legitimate comments are removed
- Admins must not engage with any private messaging with children or parents/carers
- Admins should avoid tweeting about topics not directly related to school or education

How do I report a Twitter account or Tweet?

- The Twitter Trust & Safety team responds to potential violations of the Twitter Rules: <https://support.twitter.com/articles/18311#>
- When you report a concern to Twitter, you’ll need the following information:
- A detailed description of your issue
- Direct links to any Tweets you'd like Twitter to review
- To find the direct links to individual Tweets, see the help page: <https://support.twitter.com/articles/80586-how-to-link-directly-to-an-individual-tweet>
- Twitter may take action regarding issuing including brand and trademark complaints, breach of privacy, harassment and violent threats and impersonation (unless the account is clearly identified as unofficial or a parody)

- You can find out more information about reporting violations to Twitter here: <https://support.twitter.com/categories/284>

Evaluating a Twitter Account

- Once your Twitter account is live, ensure you set a timeframe in which to evaluate its success and have clear aims and objectives to help you measure this
- If a concern occurs, revisit your training and policies, and identify any lessons to be learnt.
- Involve all members of the community in reviewing the success (or not) of the Twitter account – have they had a good or bad experience, and do they have any constructive comments or views to help inform you?

Useful Twitter Terms to know

- **@** - The @ sign is used to call out usernames in Tweets, like this: Hello@Twitter! When a username is preceded by the @ sign, it becomes a link to a Twitter profile
- **Blocking** - To block someone on Twitter means they will be unable to follow you or add you to their lists, and Twitter will not deliver their mentions to your mentions tab: <https://support.twitter.com/articles/117063-how-to-block-users-on-twitter>
- **Deactivation** - A way to remove your profile from Twitter. Information from deactivated profiles remains in Twitters system for 30 days. Learn how to deactivate your account here: <https://support.twitter.com/articles/15358-how-to-deactivate-your-account>
- **Direct Message** – This is also called a DM. These Tweets are private between the sender and recipient (unless a user chooses to share or copy the DM).
- **Email Notifications** - Preferences set by Twitter users to regulate notifications via email about events on your account, such as new followers and new direct messages. Read about how to change your email preferences here: <https://support.twitter.com/articles/127860-how-to-change-your-email-preferences#>
- **Favourite** - To favourite a Tweet means to mark it as one of your favourite messages. You can favourite a tweet by clicking the yellow star next to the message
- **Geolocation/Geotagging** - The use of location data in Tweets to tell Twitter and your followers where you are in real time. Is also called "Tweet with Your Location." Learn how to safely Tweet with your location here: <https://support.twitter.com/articles/78525-about-the-tweet-location-feature#> Education Safeguarding Team
- **Hashtag** - The # symbol is used to mark keywords or topics in a Tweet and can be used to find interesting or current topics. Find out more about using Hashtags here: <https://support.twitter.com/articles/49309-what-are-hashtags-symbols#>
- **Mention** - Mentioning another user in your Tweet by including the @ sign followed directly by their username is called a "mention". This also refers to Tweets in which your username was included
- **Retweet** - The act of forwarding or sharing another user's Tweet to all your followers. This is seen as twitter as "RT"
- **Verification** - A process whereby a user's Twitter account is "stamped" to show that a legitimate source is authoring the account's Tweets. Users should be aware that this is not always 100% accurate

Personalise Your Twitter Profile

- Upload a profile picture. Probably best to use your school logo, school seal, or even a well-known image of the school
- Enter the school name, location and school's website
- Complete the bio section with a general description of your school. Have a look at some others e.g. *X Primary School - Community school in the heart of London's Notting Hill. Loving Learning. Making a Difference. Tweets by staff*

- Navigate to the design section and select a solid background colour that is one of your school's colours
- Consider if you want a banner graphic and prepare it

Set-up and administration

Public or private?

Twitter accounts have the option of public or private (protected) settings – if you protect your account, your tweets cannot be copied (retweeted) by others and will only be seen by people you approve as your followers. If you think of your Twitter account as an extension to your school's public website, unless you intend to tweet confidential or sensitive information, or photos of students those parents have not given permission to be online, a public Twitter will probably suit you.

Just for clarity: By default, if the parents who follow the school reply to any tweets, just the school will see them. However, if the parents start to follow each other, they see replies sent to the school from other parents.

If the school ultimately decides it would like to make the account public, then it's easy to do so. You may decide it's better to become more permissive than more restrictive.

Owners and account names

- Each Twitter account has to be linked to a unique e-mail. You could link to an individual class teacher's staff email account. However, it's probably better to have a Shared Mailbox set-up so that more than one teacher can access, e.g. there may be two Year 1 teachers and the Headteacher who want to control the tweets about Year 1 class. These users will be the account's administrator(s) and owners of the password. With staff turn-over, it's probably important that more than one person knows the password and can re-set it if someone leaves or there is a security breach on the account.
- Consider the class names for your accounts. Teachers leave, classes move up at the end of the year so it's probably sensible to choose something generic
- Make a password that is not easy to crack and is changed regularly

Operational matters

- Teachers should tweet using school devices rather than their own mobile phone, in order to protect themselves from risk
- Agree an approach on the content that will be tweeted and tweet from school where possible
- Be careful if running apps that allow posting to accounts, such as tweet deck because you could accidentally post a personal tweet to a school account, particularly if using a personal device (see point above)
- Ensure staff who tweet, know they must log out when finished writing a tweet. If you do not log out, anyone with physical access to the machine will be able to use the account as you - this also means they could change the password and take over control of the account
- Share your Twitter account with parents by sharing the name of the class account with them so they can follow you. If you are using Protected Accounts, it means the school must also 'approve' the followers. You would send parents the specific link and the account owner would approve them.
- Photos of school activity can be a good way of sharing events with parents. Ensure that you adhere to your school policy on publishing pupil photos. So, remember that if you post pupils photos you need to have signed permission to use those students (and staffs) photos online.
- Ensure safety issues always considered when sending out tweets, for example do not mention specifics when discussing trips etc. as there may be child protection issues around revealing where pupils are going and when, if the account is public

- Have a school 'champion' who can help new and less confident teachers. This helps maintain a momentum for using Twitter, and supports professional development
- Remember as a tweet can only have 140 characters, including spaces, if you wish to give a link, you will probably need to use a link shortening tool such as <https://bitly.com/>
- Ensure operational staff know the basic tools of Twitter and how to block a user – should you have need: <https://support.twitter.com/groups/52-notifications/topics/213-following/articles/117063-blocking-users-on-twitter> and to delete a tweet – although once posted, it will have been cached or possibly re-tweeted, so maybe re-found. <https://support.twitter.com/articles/18906->
- Deleting-a-tweet: <https://support.twitter.com/articles/31796-my-account-has-been-compromised>

Staff Accounts

Staff accounts will belong to the staff, and they will be solely responsible for their tweets and unless staff are linking their class blogs, direct reference to the school should be avoided.

Twitter etiquette

Any Tweets from the official school account will be grammatically correct and will not contain text language like lol, gr8 or l8r. Some tweets may contain hashtags. Hashtags are things you can add to tweets like #edchat #PrimaryRocks this enables tweets to be added to a collection of other related tweets that are generally viewed by more people.

Safeguarding pupils

To safeguard the pupils, no names of pupils will be used alongside any pictures of pupils. All schools must have photographic consent of all the pupils. If tweets are sent inviting people to view a blog post by an individual pupil, only their first name will be used.

Who can follow the school?

Anyone can follow the school's Twitter account. Weekly checks should take place by a member of the SLT to check recent followers. Any user following the school account that is deemed unsuitable or not adding any value to the school will be blocked. A member of the SLT will make this decision on a case-by-case basis. Parents will be encouraged to follow the official school account to receive the information the school is posting up to Twitter.

If staff have individual, personal accounts they should not allow parents or pupils to follow them. Should pupils request to follow a staff account the staff member is to block the pupil and inform a member of the SLT at their earliest convenience.

What is inappropriate content and referencing and how will it be dealt with?

The school welcomes referencing, interaction or mentions.

School deems any of the following as inappropriate

- Offensive language or remarks aimed at the school, its staff, parents, LEC members or others affiliated with the school
- Unsuitable images or content posted into its feed
- Unsuitable images or content finding its way from another's account into the school feed
- Images or text that infringe upon copyright
- Comments that aim to undermine the school, its staff, parents, governors, or others affiliated with the school

Any inappropriate content will be reported to Twitter and its users will be blocked. Furthermore, incidents of a more serious nature may be reported to the appropriate authority.