**3.2 Policy and Guidelines for the use of Social Networking sites and the use of the Internet.**

Our Pre-school recognises that many employees, parents and carers use the internet for personal purposes and that they may participate in social networking on websites such as: Facebook, Myspace, Twitter, etc. In addition, employees, parents and carers may set up personal weblogs (blogs) on the internet.

Whilst employees, parents and carers are free to use the internet in this way, they must ensure that they do not breach the law or disclose Shoreham Pre-school’s confidential information, breach copyright, defame the Pre-school, it’s suppliers, partners, customers or other employees, or disclose personal data or information about any individual that could breach the Data Protection Act 1998 and to keep completely confidential any information regarding the children, their families or other staff which is learned through the Pre-school.

The purpose of this policy is to outline the responsibilities of employees, parents and carers setting up personal websites and blogs and using social networking websites. This policy relates to material posted on public areas and those restricted to certain individuals.

The internet provides a number of benefits in which Shoreham Pre-school staff may wish to participate. However, when someone is identified with Shoreham Pre-school or discusses their work, they are expected to behave appropriately when on the internet.

The internet is a fast moving technological hub and it is impossible to cover all circumstances. However, the principles set out in this document should always be followed. If in any doubt then details should be discussed with the manager before going any further.

The intention of this note is not to stop staff from conducting legitimate activities on the internet, but serves to flag up those areas in which conflicts can arise.

Action under the Pre-school Employment and Staffing policy or withdrawal of the child from the Pre-school.

The Pre-school’s complaint policy aims to provide guidance to all those who work with or within the Pre-school or anyone who may from time to time think that they need to raise with someone in confidence certain issues relating to the Pre-school. Employees with complaints about their own personal circumstances should refer to our Complaints policy and procedure and confidentiality policy.

* Employees, parents and carers should not link their site to the Pre-school’s website.
* Employees, parents and carers must not use the Pre-school website, internet systems, e-mail for their blog and employees must not write blogs in employer time.

Employees, parents and carers must not have any hyperlinks to the Pre-school website or resources.

**Social Networking Sites**

Social networking sites provide a great way for people to maintain contact with friends. Pre-school respects an employee’s right to a private life. However, the Pre-school must also ensure that confidentiality and it’s reputation are protected. (Please refer to our confidentiality policy). However, through the open nature of such sites, it is also possible for third parties (including Pre-school parents) to access this information. The Pre-school therefore requires all employees using social networking sites to:

* Ensure that they do not conduct themselves in a way that is detrimental to the Pre-school staff/members on the internet. Staff members should respect the privacy and the feelings of others. This could be deemed a disciplinary offence.
* Refrain from identifying themselves as working for the Pre-school.
* Take care not to allow their interaction on these websites to damage working relations between members of staff and clients of the Pre-school.

**Cyber Bullying**

Shoreham Pre-school is committed to ensuring that all of its staff, parents and carers are treated with respect and dignity. Bullying and

**Principles**

Staff of Shoreham Pre-school are in a professional position and are responsible for the care and education for Early Years children.

Therefore they must not:

* Engage in activities on the Internet which might bring Shoreham Pre-school or it’s associated employees/members into disrepute.
* Defame (slander/libel) anyone. An employee, parent or carer who makes a defamatory statement that is published on the internet may be legally liable for any damage to the reputation of the individual concerned.
* Include personal information about an individual without his/her consent, otherwise they risk breaching the Data Protection Act 1998, which is a criminal offence.
* Include material that is abusive, defamatory, sexist, racist or that could be interpreted as harassment or bullying.

**Websites and Blogs**

Shoreham Pre-school does not encourage employees to write about their work in any way and would prefer for them not to do so. If individuals choose to do so, then they should follow the rules below. Employees who have a weblog or website should not disclose the name of Shoreham Pre-school on I tor allow it to be identified by any details at all. This includes posting pictures of the Pre-school premises or events with work colleagues, parents, children etc. The following guidelines apply:

* Employees, parents and carers must not disclose any information that is confidential to the Pre-school or any third party that has disclosed information to the Pre-school. The Pre-school’s Confidentiality Policy provides guidance about what constitutes confidential information.
* If employees, parents and carers choose to write about their work or experience at Pre-school even without identifying the precise name of the Pre-school, It may still be possible for people to work out the employer’s/Pre-school’s identity. Individuals should always be conscious of their duty to act in good faith and in the best interests of the Pre-school under English law. This is a very strong legal obligation.
* The pre-school will not tolerate criticisms in weblogs. Even where they are true and not defamatory, they will amount to a breach of the employee’s contract/child’s registration and could lead to harassment of any kind will not be tolerated. Cyberbullying methods could include text messages, mobile phone calls, instant messenger services, circulating photos or video clips or by posting comments on websites, blogs or chat rooms. Personal blogs that refer to colleagues without their consent is also unacceptable. Employees, parents and carers who cyberbully could also face criminal prosecution under various laws. Including the Malicious Communications act 1988.

**Personal use of the internet**

Shoreham Pre-school does not allow personal use of the internet during session times.

**Disciplinary action**

If necessary, action will be taken against any employee, parent or carer who is found to be in breach of this policy.

**Security and identity theft**

Employees, parents and carers should be aware that social networking websites are a public forum, particularly if they are part of a “network”. Employees, parents and carers should not assume that their entries on any website will remain private.

Employees, parents and carers must also be security conscious and should take steps to protect themselves from identity theft, for example by restricting the amount of personal information that they give out. Social networking websites allow people to post detailed personal information such as date of birth, place of birth and, for example, favourite football tea. Which can form the basis of security questions and passwords.

**Important considerations**

When writing a weblog and placing information on social networking sites, employees, parents and carers should be careful not to:

* Include any information that breaches copyright and should link to other material rather than cutting and pasting it.