# What to Consider when Setting Up an Official Twitter Account

**Please note this guidance is not exhaustive and is intended to support educational settings in making informed decisions.**

Twitter is an information network or micro-blogging site where users can send messages of up-to 140-characters, called 'Tweets'. 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/setting want a Twitter account?
- A Twitter account can be a useful and free way of publicising your school/setting 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/setting will have more control over its digital reputation.
- Advertising - prospective parents may search for your school/setting 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/setting website, Facebook, learning platform, newsletter etc.

## What can a Twitter account offer your school/setting?
- Sharing
  - Sharing links to your website or learning platform.
  - Sharing links to information for parents.
  - Sharing information about what's happening at your school/setting
- Consultation
  - Schools and settings 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.

- Creating an official web presence
    - The school/setting 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 and settings 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.
    - 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/settings 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 setting could be subjected to tweets which complain about the school/setting 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 risk assessment to identity 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

- Consider trialling the account with a class or a year group before whole-school/setting 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/setting 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 years 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 management team.
  - In some cases it will be appropriate to have more than one admin, as content should be updated regularly and follower's etc. may need to be checked to ensure they are suitable. Sufficient time will need to be allocated to allow this and schools/settings will need to consider how this can be managed.
- The school/setting will need to ensure that any admins have signed an appropriate Acceptable Use Policy and have accessed sufficient training to enable them to manage the Twitter account(s) successfully. Admins must be professional at all times and be aware that they are an ambassador for the school/setting.
- The school/setting will need to consider how admins will access and manage the account e.g. will they have a school/setting 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/setting 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 in order 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/settings 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/settings control over who can see their content. Many schools/settings choose this approach initially to begin to understand how Twitter operates etc.
  - Some schools/settings 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/settings will need to regularly review the account to approve or reject request and also 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?

- Twitters 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.
- When engaging with children aged 13+ then schools/settings will need to appropriately assess the decision, considering benefits and risks. Schools/settings will need to demonstrate that all reasonable precautions have been taken to reduce the risks of children being identified.
- Schools/settings 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/setting activity can be a good way of sharing events and information with parents, students and staff.
- Schools/settings 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 and settings 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/setting unless they are authorised to do so.
- Admins should avoid mentioning specific details when discussing trips and events etc., as there might 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.
  - 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/setting 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.

## 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::

- o A detailed description of your issue
- o 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.
  - o If a concern occurs, revisit your training and policies and identify any lessons to be learnt.
  - o 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#

- **Hashtag -** The # symbol is used to mark keywords or topics in a Tweet and can be used to find intresting 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 of 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.