

# Online contact, social media & communication with children policy

When an adult communicates with children they must do so in an appropriate and safe manner whether that is in person, by phone or text, online or via a social networking / messaging website. Boldmere Swimming & Water Polo Club recognise the importance of this and require all adults to adhere to Swim England child protection requirements through the Wavepower 2020-2023 policies and procedures whenever any communication is made with a child.

Boldmere Swimming and Water Polo Club works with children and families as part of its activities. This includes performance swimming and water polo up to national level, with teaching and coaching for both swimming and water polo. For the purposes of this policy, a child will be defined as any young person who has not reached the age of qualifying for the Masters squad.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and young people is paramount when adults, young people or children are using the internet, social media or mobile devices.
- provide coaches and volunteers with the overarching principles that guide our approach to online safety.
- ensure that, as an organisation, we operate in line with our values and within the law in terms of how we use online devices. The policy statement applies to all coaches, volunteers, children and young people and anyone involved in Boldmere Swimming and Water Polo's activities.

Boldmere Swimming and Water Polo Club recognises that the use of networking sites is a growing phenomenon and is increasingly used as a communication tool of choice. Although these technologies are useful and provide exciting opportunities they are also unfortunately accompanied by dangers and negative consequences if abused by users.

This policy has been created in order to set down guidelines and advice for acceptable usage of all online contact and communications that relate to Boldmere Swimming and Water Polo Club. The policy includes, but is not limited to, the following:-

Twitter, Whatsapp, Bebo, Facebook, SnapChat, Flickr, Instagram, Tumblr and any other networking sites

YouTube

Zoom / MS Teams / Google Classroom and any other online meeting resources

Phone / Text / Email communications

Each Club squad should have a WhatsApp messaging group for administrators, parents and Club members to communicate with other members of the squad. Administrators of this group should include the lead coach for the squad, at least one additional member of the Club committee and the Welfare Officer. This should be the primary method of informal communications between the squad, centred around club activities. Only persons over the age of 18 should be on these groups, however with parental consent Club members over the age of 16 may be added to the group.

The Club currently has a presence on Twitter and Facebook. The Committee will appoint an administrator of these accounts who will seek to extend the reach of the Club into the wider community, whilst upholding all Club values.

Official Club information to members should only be sent via email by Committee nominated volunteers using a @teamboldmere.co.uk email account in order to minimise the risk of online imposters.

**The following rules must be adhered to at all times:-**

- Never post any photos or videos or make comments that may be hurtful, untrue or upsetting, or that may be used by other people in a way you did not intend.
- Do not post content that could bring you, or the Club, into disrepute. This includes disparaging comments, anything that contains nudity, photos of a sexually suggestive nature, graphic or gratuitous violence, and anything that can be regarded as racist, biased or misleading.
- Never post any personal information about anyone else that leaves the other person vulnerable to online abuse, bullying, identity theft or exposure to inappropriate content.

**Additional Guidance for Coaches, Teachers and Volunteers (Adults)**

Coaches, teachers or volunteers of the Club should not personally hold the mobile phone numbers, email addresses or social media addresses belonging to children of the Club, nor hold one-to-one conversations using this format with them at any time. All online coaching or training to children or vulnerable adults must be organised through official Club channels, and never on a one-to-one basis. All online coaching and training will have an appropriate adult nominated by the Club to oversee the session and will remain online throughout the session. Should any safeguarding concerns be raised by the nominated appropriate the session is to cease and the Welfare Officer immediately notified.

Coaches, teachers or volunteers of the Club should not be in contact with a child through social networking sites if they are members of the club. Friendship requests (or equivalent) from any young person in the Club should not be accepted. Contact with the child should be through the Club and the parent/guardian.

The publishing of a photo or video on any social networking site is governed by the same requirements as those contained within the Swim England photography guidance. Social networks should never be used as a tool to abuse or criticise club members or Swim England organisations. To do so is likely to be in breach of the Swim England Rules and Regulations.

This policy applies to all members or persons involved with Boldmere Swimming and Water Polo Club and includes coaches, assistant coaches, teachers, officials, volunteers and swimmers. The only exclusions to this are if the adult has direct parental responsibility for the child, or they are closely related. Any specific exemptions for safeguarding reasons should be referred to the Welfare Officer for guidance.

### **Additional Guidance for Coaches, Teachers and Volunteers aged between 18 to 21**

Swim England recognises that many young coaches will have been members of the Club before becoming a coach, and will have been friends with their fellow members, some of whom will be 16 to 17 years old or below. It is therefore possible they will have contact details for those members and will be friends with them on social networking sites. In these circumstances Swim England accepts that it would be inappropriate to require such friends to be removed from their contact list on the networking sites. The coach is, however, advised to inform the Welfare Officer and the Head Coach of any friends on their networking site that they may also coach.

### **Additional Guidance for Coaches, Teachers and Volunteers aged 16 to 18**

If the coach is a young person aged 16 or 17 and requires contact with other coaches aged 18 and over for professional reasons, written consent must be obtained from the parent/guardian which names the individual adult and social networking site concerned. The named adult must agree to keep contact with the young person to the discussion of matters relevant to the young person's professional role within the club. All communications should be shared with an identified third person e.g. parent/guardian or Club Welfare officer. If the young person or adult is found to be in breach of the above, action must be taken by the club to address the concern, or the breach can be referred to Swim England or statutory agencies concerned.

### **Additional Guidance for Swimmers under the age of 18**

Do not ask your coach or teacher to be your friend on any social networking site. They will refuse, as to accept would be a breach of good practice. Use the internet responsibly and don't place yourself at risk. Be careful who you invite to be your friend and follow the good advice of the social networking sites to ensure you are talking to the person that you think you are talking.

Always remember that any communications, comments, videos or photographs that are posted onto a networking site may be shared or seen by more people than you intended. Never share any photos of yourself, family or friends that you wouldn't be happy for your family to see. Always remember social media is instantaneous and can sometimes mean that posts are sent in the 'heat of the moment' and then instantly regretted. Never place a comment on the internet that you would not put in writing or say out loud to someone.

## **Additional Guidance for Parents of Swimmers under the age of 18**

Many parents are becoming 'friends' with their children on social networking sites, perhaps for security reasons and to ensure the wellbeing of their child. This may give the parent access to the profiles of other children listed as 'friends' of their child. It would not be appropriate for the club to prevent a parent whose own child is a swimmer from using this form of protection for their child's online activities. The parent concerned should not have direct contact with other swimmers through the social networking site, unless prior consent has been given from the child's parent. Where the parent has access to the child's networking site they should not contact any other children under the pretence of being their child. Parents should be aware that posting any content on a social networking site of a derogatory nature will breach the Parent's Code of Conduct.

## **General Guidelines for Parents**

Prevention is better than cure, and to help protect your children, they need to understand how to prevent putting themselves in vulnerable situations. Please try to:

- Limit the amount of personal information your child has on show
- Remind your child that the internet is available to everyone
- Talk with your child about the importance of being wary of strangers
- Educate your child to be aware of potential online predators. Some people may post false or misleading information about themselves including their identities.
- Check privacy policies
- Be on the look-out for cyber bullying
- Be aware of your child's online habits
- Guide them to appropriate sites
- Teach them about internet safety

## What to do if you have concerns

You may at some point, come across or be made aware of, inappropriate use of social networking. If this is in relation to the swimming club, please inform the Club Welfare Officer.

Alternatively, you or your swimmer can raise concerns anonymously with the following organisations:

- Swimline Child Protection helpline: 0808 100 4001
- [www.childnet.org.uk](http://www.childnet.org.uk) (NSPCC support service for young people)
- Stop It Now Freephone 0808 1000 900
- NSPCC helpline and website 0800 800 5000 [www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)
- The Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) [www.iwf.org.uk](http://www.iwf.org.uk)

If you are unhappy with content you are tagged in, 'untag' yourself or contact the person and ask them to remove the content. If you think the content breaks the terms of use of the social networking site, report it directly to them. If you are asked to remove content, do so immediately.

## Consequence of actions

Please be aware that anyone posting messages, comments or any media on a social networking site that breaches the above social media policy may face disciplinary action in accordance with the Club's disciplinary procedures.

## Further Information

Swim England has produced detailed guidance on the use of social networking, which can be found in Wavepower. <https://www.swimming.org/swimengland/wavepower-child-safeguarding-for-clubs/>

1. Please refer to the TSSCM photography policy
2. Swim England photography guidance can be found at [www.swimming.org/swimengland/wavepower-child-safeguarding-for-clubs](http://www.swimming.org/swimengland/wavepower-child-safeguarding-for-clubs)
3. The IWF was established by the internet industry to provide an anonymous hotline for the public and IT professionals to report criminal online content in a secure and confidential way.

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