FALKIRK COUNCIL

Subject:	**SOCIAL MEDIA IN SCHOOLS TO ENHANCE LEARNING AND TEACHING**
Meeting:	**EDUCATION EXECUTIVE**
Date:	**28 May 2013**
Author:	**DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION**

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Social Media refers to the technologies and platforms which manage communication between organisations, communities and individuals. The most common examples of these Social Media sites are: YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, and Blogging platforms.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- To provide members with updated information on the current range of social media sites and their potential use.
- To bring to members attention the potential and exciting education benefits which could be offered and made accessible to staff and pupils throughout our schools by allowing controlled access to some social media sites.
- To seek Executive's approval to allow schools controlled access to these sites where they offer added value to learning and teaching within the curriculum.

3. BLOGGING

3.1 A blog is a user created information site published to the internet, consisting of a collection of individual posts. These posts can be enabled to allow feedback comments, discussions, or ratings.

3.2 We have successfully used blogs as a means of supporting the work of Falkirk Council Education Services pupils and staff over the last 5 years. During this time users have successfully maintained their own blogs, added and moderated content, and attracted thousands of visitors from all over the globe.

Some examples of existing blogs are shown below:

Education Services Curriculum Support Team Blog:
https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/fa/CurriculumSupport/

EMA Support for pupils and parents:
https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/fa/FalkirkEMA/

Kinneil Primary School:
https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/fa/KinneilPrimarySchool/

Mr Doyle's History Blog:
https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/fa/MrDoylesHistoryBlog/

ICT to Support Learning and Teaching in Falkirk Primary schools:
https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/fa/ICTFalkirkPrimaries/

4. TWITTER (www.twitter.com)

4.1 Twitter is an online microblogging service that allows users to send and read messages of up to 140 Characters, known as "tweets". Twitter also has the ability to add video and image content to a tweet in order to add impact and immediacy to the subject.

4.2 Falkirk Council Education Services has been using Twitter for several years, with some excellent examples of use to support learning and teaching:

Larbert High School Languages Department:
https://twitter.com/LHSLanguages

Airth Primary School:
https://twitter.com/airthprimary

4.3 Education establishments are also able to embed this Twitter feed into their existing school website, allowing them to quickly and easily update information to pupils, parents, and the wider community:

Stenhousemuir Primary School
http://www.stenhousemuir.falkirk.sch.uk/

5. YOUTUBE (www.youtube.com)

5.1 YouTube is an online video streaming website that can provide useful knowledge and education content for all stages in schools and nurseries. In addition, users can create content and upload it to the site in order to store it or share knowledge or learning with others.

5.2 YouTube has been open to staff in Falkirk Council for many years and has proven to be a vital tool in terms of classroom practice and staff development. It is regularly the top visited site in education establishments and staff now integrate the content into their lesson plans and activities.

5.3 Currently, all pupils are blocked from access to the YouTube site, plus any embedded YouTube content in other websites, in Falkirk schools. This decision was taken historically based on two main factors:

- The limited bandwidth available to our schools and the demands upon it.
- The proportion of content deemed unsuitable by staff.

5.4 Recent investment in infrastructure upgrade and improvements in bandwidths and safety filters now put us in a position where these two factors no longer apply.

6. FACEBOOK (www.facebook.com)

6.1   Facebook is a social networking service designed for the sharing of information and updates. In addition, users have the ability to "follow" an establishment in order to obtain the most accurate and relevant information quickly and easily.

6.2   Whilst we have been making some use of social media with staff and pupils, to date, Facebook has not been one of them even though, as of April 2012, Facebook had over 28 million users in the UK alone and amongst them will be parents, grandparents and carers of pupils attending Falkirk Council education establishments. There is anecdotal evidence to suggest that where education establishments have made use of Facebook elsewhere in the UK and further afield, they have had higher levels of engagement with their parents and communities than through other methods of communication.

6.3   Given the information in 6.2, there is an increasing view that it would be beneficial for staff in Education Services to access Facebook through the Council's Internet filter specifically, Facebook pages and groups. This would allow, for example, education establishments to promote their work and provide additional channels to promote positive messages and encourage engagement with their communities and interested parties further afield. Given the unique reach of Facebook, this last point is important in that it provides an additional channel through which communication could be entered into with parents/carers and the wider community in a convenient and modern way. Just as importantly, it gives immediacy to the communication with parents over issues/events/activities should the education establishment so wish. For example, photographs/text in relation to an education excursion could be posted in 'real time' whilst the trip is still taking place - and can be embedded to automatically appear on the education establishment's website as well. In brief, Facebook can provide parents and the wider community with a controlled 24/7 window into education establishment life.

6.4   A growing number of national teaching groups are using Facebook as a means of sharing good practice and debating professional issues and, therefore, it provides a serious adjunct to other forms of professional development.

6.5   Facebook pages created by outside agencies working on collaborative projects with education establishments have proven highly successful. Being able to share the work undertaken by these agencies in our education establishments promotes and markets what they do with a huge audience on a platform they enjoy. Cross-posting promotion of events and activities of education establishment-related groups (such as Parent Associations) means they can be more easily shared with the wider community. One of the real benefits of Facebook, over other social media, is its capacity to "push" information relevant to the Facebook user through notifications or alerts and cross-referenced to other media such as education establishment websites, wikis and blogs.

7.   DRIVERS FOR CHANGE

7.1   Scottish Government has set out their Technologies for Learning Strategy, in line with the ongoing development of Glow, containing five main objectives to be achieved over this term of government. These objectives, announced by the Cabinet Secretary via YouTube, are:

- To change the culture of the use of ICT
- To improve confidence in the use of ICT for learners, teachers, school leaders and parents
- To promote new behaviours for teaching
- To deepen parental engagement
- To strengthen position on hardware and associated infrastructure

7.2   The increase in the use of mobile and tablet devices has increased the range of opportunities for additional communication channels with pupils, parents, and the wider community. YouTube's Channel feature allows schools to have an official verified repository of video, which can be used to create and embed content for lesson delivery, celebrating success, or more general promotion and communication. Facebook and Twitter have apps for mobile devices, giving immediate access to relevant and up to date information related to their education establishment.

7.3   In recent years, teachers have sought to put video of class activities and pupil achievement online. Education Services have had frequent requests from schools frustrated by the time consuming workarounds in order to do so.

7.4   An online survey was created to gather the views of staff on the use of YouTube to enhance learning and teaching. The survey ran from 12 September to 12 November and had 296 responses from staff of all stages of education. In addition, 104 written comments were gathered. From this survey, it was clear that there is a difference in viewpoint between Nursery, Primary, and Secondary stages. Secondary respondents were, in general, in favour of allowing pupil access to YouTube in class, whilst Primary and Nursery respondents in general favoured retaining controls for pupil access.

8.   PROPOSAL/WAY FORWARD

8.1   In light of the information in sections 3-7 and as the next stage in our growing use of social media as promoted by Scottish Government, it is recommended to make available in a managed and controlled manner:

- YouTube to pupil groups and,
- Facebook to staff groups.

8.2   To make these available would be consistent with the Education ICT Strategy which aims to:

- Enable learners of all abilities to take greater control of their learning through the application of ICT in and out of school. This will be supported by the use of ICT in a balanced way throughout the curriculum.
- Develop learners' skills to know when and when not to use ICT, and have the facility to use it effectively when needed.
- Give learners access to high quality digital learning resources whenever and wherever they are needed and provide links to their classmates and teachers while studying out of school.
- Staff having access to Social Media within an education establishment context will also enable teachers to provide age-appropriate education for pupils on the safe use of this popular medium (in relation to privacy settings and appropriate online behaviours) which at the moment can only be done theoretically for some forms of Social Media.

9.   SUPPORT AND ONGOING

9.1   Subject to the approval of any such change, a 'Technologies in the Classroom' group will be formed the manage the process, made up of classroom practitioners from all stages of education in Falkirk Council and including experienced staff. This group would have the mandate to call upon advice from appropriate groups of additional individuals including pupils, parents, and partners including colleagues from across Scotland.

9.2   The immediate tasks for this group would be to:

- Create support materials for staff and pupils in the use of Social Media sites.
- Develop methods to educate staff, pupils, and parents on the safe filtering features in Social Media sites and to ensure acceptable use in line with the Acceptable Use Policy and schools' positive behaviour policies.
- Pilot with schools access to the Social Media sites referred to.
- Work to gather and analyse evidence of how Social Media is enhancing learning through existing learning approaches whilst encouraging the use of new learning models.

9.3   In addition, education establishments would be provided with support to set up YouTube channels and Facebook pages.

9.4   For Falkirk Council Education Services staff, there is a raft of additional guidance on the use of social media produced locally and at a national level:

- Social media guidelines for Falkirk Council Employees:
  http://underground.falkirk.gov.uk/work/ict_services/pdf/social_media.pdf

- GTCS registered staff have been issued with professional guidance on the appropriate use of Electronic Communications, including Social Media:
  http://www.gtcs.org.uk/web/FILES/teacher-regulation/professional-guidance-ecomms-social-media.pdf

- There is the existing AUP on Social Media that has been circulated at least twice in the last year:
  http://underground.falkirk.gov.uk/work/ict_services/pdf/social_media.pdf

10.   FINANCIAL, TECHNOLOGICAL AND EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

10.1   <u>Financial</u>
Although there are **no** direct financial implications of this work, as the Social Media platforms referred to in this report are offered for free, it is recognised that there will be some administrative work needed to be carried out by schools if they wish to use such sites. It is hoped however that schools embrace this as part of a more efficient method of updating multiple communications channels at the same time.

10.2   <u>Technological</u>
During the last session our JaNet Internet Connection into the Authority was upgraded from 100Mb to 200Mb, with the capacity for incremental upgrades up to 1Gb. In conjunction with this, an ongoing 4 year programme of bandwidth upgrades to schools has allowed for greater capacity in our bandwidth provision for streaming media and social media sites. Corporate ICT teams have been made aware of the proposed development which presents no technical difficulties.

10.3   <u>Equality</u>

- There should be **no** equality issues that arise from the use and availability of social media sites from a classroom curricular delivery angle, as these will be accessed via the schools own ICT devices.

- Education Services are aware of the potential equality challenges that would arise if pupils were allowed to access the internet, via schools Wi-Fi provision, on their own devices, such as mobile phones, i-pads etc. This is an area that we expect will be subject of some national guidance and we will report back to Executive at a future date as required.

11.   RECOMMENDATIONS

11.1   Executive is asked to:

(i)   approve the introduction of YouTube in a controlled environment for all young people in Falkirk schools;

(ii)   approve the use of Facebook as a social media tool for teaching and support staff in schools for educational purposes;

(iii)   approve that these changes are incorporated within Education Services ICT Strategy in line with Section 8.2; and

(iv)   otherwise, note the contents of this report.

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Director of Education

Date: 16 May 2013

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LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Technologies for Learning, Scottish Government
http://engageforeducation.org/2011/09/technologies-for-learning-unpacking-the-objectives-introduction/
Flipped Learning Models
http://youtu.be/4a7NbUIr_iQ
http://www.knewton.com/flipped-classroom/
Cabinet Secretary's YouTube announcement on Technologies for Learning
http://youtu.be/TVD7k3nw_CQ