

Devizes Rugby Football Club

DRFC SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Devizes RFC recognizes that social media channels are useful options for coaches and team managers to manage the administration of age group training and fixtures. But, social media channels associated with children also cover safeguarding risk and those set up for club purposes must be run on the principles set out in the [RFU SafeGuarding toolkit – section 9](#)

The risks posed by social media are well-established: the privacy provided, the wide range of content that can be transmitted, including content of a violent, sexual or hateful nature, the ease with which images can be forwarded onto others, the difficulty in knowing truly who you are communicating with and the speed of proliferation of rumours and accusations of improper conduct.

In sport, there are additional risks: inappropriate pressure can be exerted by adults, particularly coaches, on children or inappropriate criticism of a child's performance. An official position or role within a club, such as coach, can carry with it a level of authority, and engender a level of trust, that facilitates the control of a child.

Club social media facilities

The club website - <http://devizesrfc.rfu.club/> - provides a central news and information point for all sections of the club and we also operate a Twitter account *#devizesrfc*.

The club uses the RFU GMS system for storing and managing players' and other club members personal data. Coaches / team managers can use GMS to access records of the players that they coach so there should be no need for separate, individual databases of player personal information.

All of the above are appropriately access-controlled and moderated.

Social media groups

Social media groups run for club or age group administration should be established with:

- A clear, club rugby-connected purpose.
- Controlled access to membership for adults only – e.g. coaches and parents, coaches only.
- For groups for parents, open access to all parents within the age group – including both parents involved in child custody arrangements – but with an alternative communication for those who want to opt out.
- A clearly identifiable administrator / monitor with control of access rights to the group who is also an age group team manager, coach or parent.
- All group members being easily visible to all other members.

Good uses of social media groups are:

- Administration of training and fixtures
- Planning and review coaching sessions
- Planning tours and social events
- Sharing pictures of the group in action – see "Images" below.

Social media groups should not be used as a forum for:

- Exchanging personal data.
- Criticism of officials
- Criticism of individual players.
- Discussion of children's lives outside of rugby.
- Sharing of inappropriate images or non-rugby images of children.

All group users need to remember that comments they make are on the record and they should conduct themselves in the spirit of rugby and be as circumspect in expressing their opinion as they would be when writing a letter or email.

Communication between coaches and players

It is club policy that all communication between coaches, team managers and other club officials (all referred to here as "coaches") and players should be through their parents or with parents copied in.

When communicating by phone, coaches should speak to the parent of a child

Club Officials and coaches should not communicate with individual children by text or on-line at any time, on any matter, unless there is an immediate risk to the welfare of that child which can be lessened by such contact.

If a coach needs to communicate club-related information to children by email (such as training or match details), it should use email groups comprising email addresses given by parents and /or social media groups set up as above. It is inadvisable for a coach to communicate by email on a one-to-one basis with a child - if replying to an email from a child the parent should be copied in to the response.

Coaches should not communicate with children through social networking sites such as Facebook. Coaches should not be "friends" with the children they coach.

It is impossible to address every issue or cover every scenario a coach might encounter when communicating with children and it is appreciated that different ages will need to be treated differently. However, in all cases the above guidelines should be considered when determining the most appropriate method of communication in any given circumstances.

Coaches are not required to monitor players' social media activity but if they are made aware of online bullying involving players from their age group they should treat this as a reportable safeguarding issue.

DRFC CLUB PHOTOGRAPHIC POLICY

Devizes RFC and the RFU positively encourages parents and spectators to take photographs of participants involved in rugby union to celebrate the ethos and spirit of the sport.

However, there may be circumstances where taking a photograph might not be acceptable or where distributing photographic images could put the child at risk. Any photograph (digital or printed) which is produced and released into the public domain may be misused by anyone as once this has been done, control has been lost.

Taking photographs

While spectator photography at Devizes RFC fixtures and training is permitted, a photographer may legitimately be asked to cease taking pictures if:

- Their photography is proving disruptive to the purpose of the game / session
- They are obstructing or distracting players or match officials
- They put themselves in danger by stepping beyond safety barriers.

Photographs of children

A "child" is anyone under the age of 18 engaged in any rugby union activity at Devizes RFC or as a Devizes RFC club member.

Again, parents and families are encouraged to take photographs of their children playing rugby at Devizes RFC. In addition to the above general rules it is club policy that:

Parental consent for photographs to be taken whilst a child is either at the club or at away fixtures is obtained through junior membership application and renewed through annual payment of membership subscription.

A parent has a right to withdraw this consent by informing the age group team manager or lead coach- in which case the child should not be photographed until permission has been re-granted.

Children must be appropriately dressed when being photographed. It is never acceptable to capture any images in changing rooms, showers or at any time when players are dressing. Images should be neither sexual, of an exploitative nature nor open to misinterpretation or misuse.

if images are distributed outside of the club or to media or social media:

- Personal information which can lead to a child being identified should never be published alongside a photograph. If it is necessary to name a child ensure you have written parental consent and have informed the parents as to how the image will be used.
- Photographs should ideally be "rugby action" or team photos, not of one individual.

Parents should be made aware if a film is being taken to be used as a coaching aid. Clubs and CBs should ensure that any footage will be carefully monitored and stored securely.

Some junior rugby festivals require separate parental consent for children participating to be photographed. The team manager / lead coach should liaise with parents to let them know and on the administration involved and parents should be aware that they may be asked to register their intention to take photographs.

Professional Photographers & Local Media

Where the club commissions professional photographers or invites the press to cover an activity, the club will:

- Ensure that the photographer has been appropriately vetted prior to the event.
- Provide a clear brief about what is considered appropriate in terms of content and behaviour.
- Inform them of the club's commitment to safeguarding children. Establish who will hold the recorded images and what they intend to do with them.
- Issue the professional photographer with identification, which must be worn at all times.