Social Media & Safe Internet Use Policy

Purpose

As an organisation working with young people, we use social media to communicate with students outside of lesson times. This is necessary to spread word of last minute rehearsals, cancellations, etc…

Middlesbrough Youth Theatre manage a number of ‘closed’ Facebook groups for the above purpose, as well running an open Facebook page and Twitter account for promotional means. It is recognized that these forms of communication are open to the public at large, and therefore some safeguards must be in place to protect child members. These are as follows:

Personal Social Media Account Guidelines

We recommend that leaders do not have students on their accounts as ‘friends’ if they are below 16, or still of compulsory school age. We acknowledge that occasionally leaders know students outside of the group, and as such are aware that some degree of flexibility must be used in these situations.

Security and privacy settings are recommended to be used and reviewed regularly. We remind leaders that anything posted publicly on social media is able to be seen by our students, and their parents. If you would not be comfortable with this, or the content may be seen as inappropriate, it would be advisable to ensure that all content remains private.

Use of private messaging between students and leaders

While we aim to avoid the use of private messages wherever possible, we acknowledge that this is sometimes necessary if messages require communication between leaders and a selected group of students. Where it is not to avoid this scenario, we recommend the following steps to safeguard our students and leaders.

1. Wherever possible, it is advisable to have more than one approved adult present in the online conversation.
2. 1:1 discussions are recommended never to occur over private social media accounts between leaders and students. In the unlikely event that this cannot be avoided (for example if a student were to message a leader with a personal query that required confidentiality) we would recommend arranging a face to face meeting with them, within view of other adults, in order to maintain their confidence while safeguarding both our leaders and our students.
3. Any messages shared between students and leaders should be saved and stored, in case they are required at a later date.

Ethics relating to sharing child member information online

MYT appreciate that the children within our care require safeguarding in regards to their data and information being shared publicly online. The below procedures are to be followed at all times when posting information online to ensure the safety of child members.

1. Signed parental permission is to be gained before any information about child members is shared online.
2. We may include a member’s name (usually in a cast list for a given production). The inclusion of members’ names however is strictly on the understanding that:
   1. No age is assigned to the member
   2. No home addresses or regions are displayed
   3. No member’s telephone or email address is displayed
   4. No member’s school is displayed (including visible logos in uniform)
   5. No member’s other activities are displayed
3. We may include photographs of our productions and rehearsals. The inclusion of images is strictly given on the understanding that:
   1. The cast name is not assigned to the relevant photograph
   2. The member’s name is not assigned to the relevant photograph
   3. Any children who are not able to have their images and information shared publicly are not included in the image.
4. Entry to our private Facebook groups is controlled by leaders, with only current members, leaders and parents granted access. The password on any protected sections of our website will be changed regularly to maintain member privacy. This is to ensure that:
   1. All rehearsal schedules are kept private, so as to maintain child member’s privacy in regards to their whereabouts outside of set sessions.
   2. All members names are kept confidential when they require contacting in relation to rehearsals or other announcements
   3. Children and their parents have a safe space to ask questions and plan logistics of rehearsals, etc… where needed.

*These procedures aim to make it extremely difficult for an outside party to identify a member and to be contact them in any way through use of the website or social media accounts.*