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# Social media safety guide for schools

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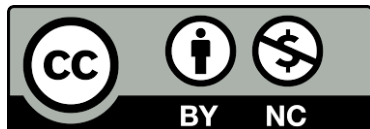Dr Kelly-Marie Taylor (Kelly-Marie.Taylor@uos.ac.uk)

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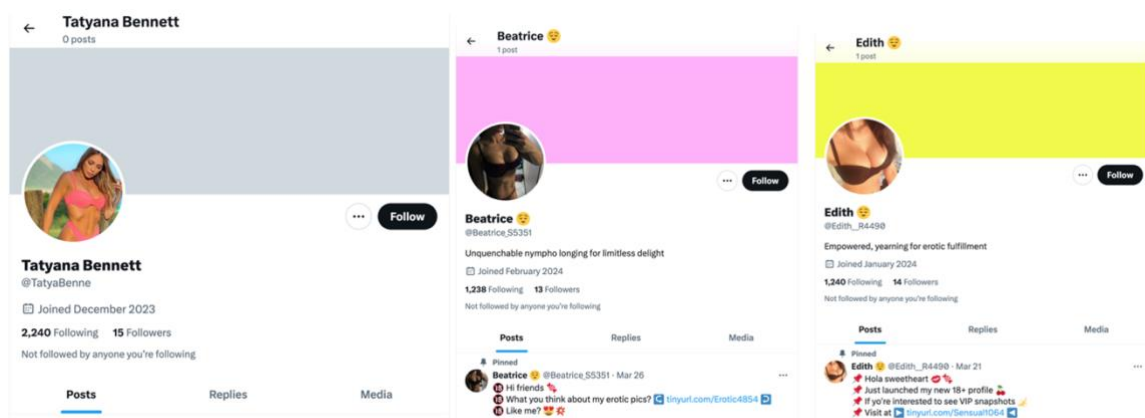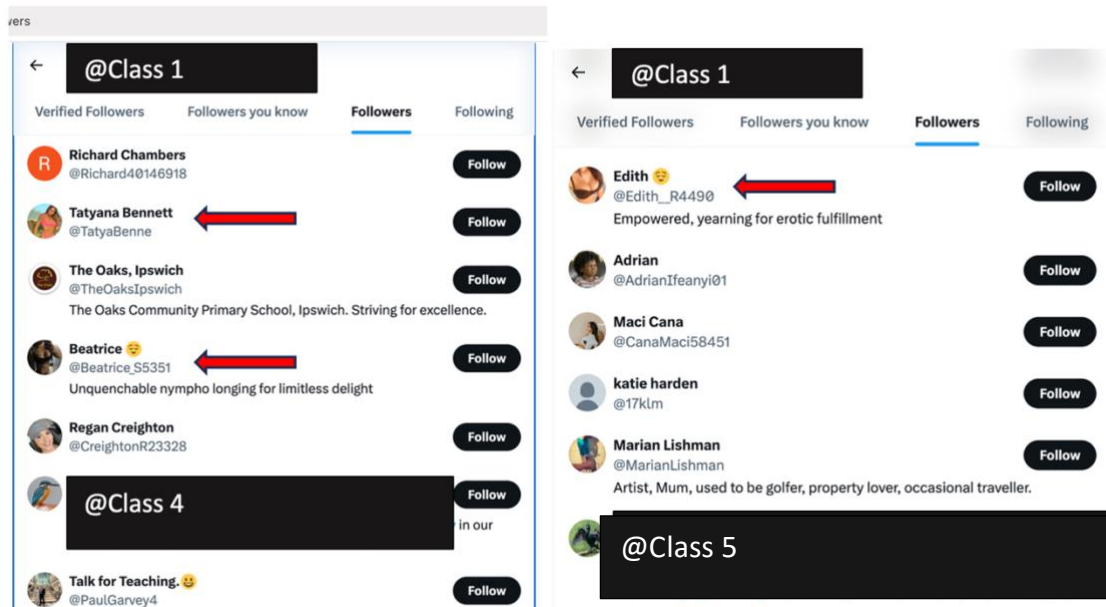
## Introduction

This document arises the review of the use of social media in a primary school by two academics working in the fields of childhood studies and data management and governance at the University of Suffolk. Upon reviewing the school's social media accounts, which was implemented during the Covid-19 pandemic to enhance engagement with families we identified several areas of concern related to the type of followers engaging with X-Twitter, as it seems that the target audience (parents and carers) is not engaging with the accounts, instead a large number of adult content producer accounts and bots seem to be the primary followers.

In an effort to contribute to the safety of the school community and safeguard both children and staff, we have gathered examples of existing issues surrounding follower activity to raise awareness of the potential risks.

Our aim is to provide guidance on how to mitigate these risks and support school staff in understanding how certain accounts may operate, particularly in relation to accessing information about students, to support the school enhancing its online safety measures and create a more secure environment for everyone.

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# Examples

@R_ Class1  - 128 followers Class1



Review – 15 (+/-) followers seem to be adult content accounts

@T_Class2 – 79 Followers

![University of Suffolk logo]

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**@Class 2** — Followers

- **Sarah Tea** @sarahshizz — ← — It's all shits and giggles until someone giggles and shits… — [Follow]
- **Richard Chambers** @Richard40146918 — [Follow]
- **Birdie Modzelewski** @BirdieModz62363 ← — [Follow]
- **Stasia Kaner** @kaner_stas — [Follow]
- **Lashonda Fereira** @LashonFerei ← — [Follow]
- **Ji Dearinger** @DearingerJ83252 — [Follow]
- **Mallory Nevins** @nevi_mallo ← — [Follow]
- **Lindsay Leiferman** @LeifermLindsa ← — [Follow]

**@Class 2** — Followers

- **Deloras Kronberg** @DelorKronb — [Follow]
- **Joni Carroll** @carroll_jo16681 — Colorado 19 Swimmer — [Follow]
- **Adelina Smart** @AdelinaSma17120 ← — [Follow]
- **Chong Myott** @myo_chon — [Follow]
- **Deon Anawaty** @anawa_de — [Follow]
- **Nisha Standback** @StandbacNish — [Follow]
- **Johanna Annas** @JohanAnnas — [Follow]
- **Aaminah Mccathran** @AMccathra — [Follow]
- **Soo Engman** @EngmanSoo22398 — [Follow]



**Lashonda Fereira** 3 posts — @LashonFerei — tinyurl.com/25j3zfws — Joined December 2023 — 3,750 Following 41 Followers — Not followed by anyone you're following

**Lea Peno** 3 posts — @LeaPeno14397 — darylastry.sa.com/LeaPeno14397 — Joined December 2023 — 2,301 Following 20 Followers — Not followed by anyone you're following

**Erica Minks** 0 posts — @MinksErica22616 — ethylherling.sa.com/MinksErica22616 — Joined October 2023 — 3,119 Following 31 Followers — Not followed by anyone you're following — Posts Replies Media

Review: 31 followers (+/-) followers seem to be adult content accounts

@M_Class3 – 125 followers

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← **@Class 3**

Verified Followers   **Followers**   Following

**Richard Chambers**
@Richard40146918
Follow

**@Class 4**
Follow
y in our

**Hannah** 😋  ⬅
@Hannah2073
Follow
Sensual and daring lady in pursuit of passionate encounters

**Louise Knowles**
@LouiseK_books
Follow
@Usborne Independent Partner | Views are my own | Inspiring children to develop a love of literacy | #lovetoread

**Calla Hornak**  ⬅
@calla6063
Follow

**Dom**
@Dom968135053159
Follow

**Alison** 😳  ⬅
@Alison2242
Follow
Playful woman in search of passionate encounters

---

← **@Class 3**

Verified Followers   **Followers**   Following

**Dom**
@Dom968135053159
Follow

**Alison** 😳
@Alison2242
Follow
Playful woman in search of passionate encounters

**Charge 80**
@charge1980
Follow

**Clementine** 👄  ⬅
@Clementine_R82
Follow
Passionate nympho woman seeks electrifying encounters

**Judith** 😌
@Judith_K3351
Follow
Seductive and irresistible  ⬅

**Helena** 😋  ⬅
@Helena8867
Follow
Passionate temptress yearning for everlasting pleasure

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**@K_Class4 32 followers**

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← **@Class 4**

Verified Followers   **Followers**   Following

**Rosalia Torrez**  ⬅
@torr_rosali
Follow

**Ellen**  ⬅
@ellen16gordon
Follow

**Indie Botta**
@in_botta
Follow

**Shemika Barrack**
@ShemBarrac
Follow

**Ernestine**
@ernestine94hale
Follow

**Johnette Kratochvil**
@JKratochv
Follow

**Kodi Kraeger**  ⬅
@KodiKraege
Follow

**Izabella Hutts**  ⬅
@izabell_hut
Follow

**Lillie Bulow**  ⬅
@LBulow13956
Follow

---

← **@Class 4**

Verified Followers   **Followers**   Following

**Britni Brennen**
@brenne_brit
Follow

**Stacy Leder**  ⬅
@LederStacy55320
Follow

**Blanka Lapham**
@blan_laph
Follow

**Selma Kurban**  ⬅
@selm_kurb
Follow

**Ha Huzzard**  ⬅
@HHuzzard29564
Follow

**Kristin Pattillo**
@KristinPat210
Follow

**@Class 6**
Follow
ke every

**Carole Faulkner**
@CaroleFaulkne20
Follow

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# Recommendations

The review we have conducted does not raise concerns in the use of Instagram or Facebook, but there are major concerns in terms of X (Twitter). This is because privacy settings in Meta Managed platforms where followers must be approved by an admin while X accounts are openly available to the public.

We find deeply concerning that accounts used to represent classes in twitter, are being followed by accounts that display adult content with inappropriate images. The presence of such accounts raises serious questions about the safety and privacy of the children. After review of a sample of accounts we notice that a high proportion of the followers are either bot accounts or inappropriate accounts.

Given that no one knows who is behind these accounts in X (Twitter), there is a risk that individuals with harmful intentions may be accessing images of children without the knowledge or consent of their parents. This not only undermines the trust between parents, the school, and the wider community but also exposes children to potential online risks, including inappropriate interactions, data misuse, and the possibility of their images being circulated without control.

To protect the students, it is crucial that schools take action to monitor and block suspicious or inappropriate accounts. Strengthening digital safeguarding practices will help ensure that the use of social media for educational purposes remains safe and focused on fostering a positive and secure learning environment.
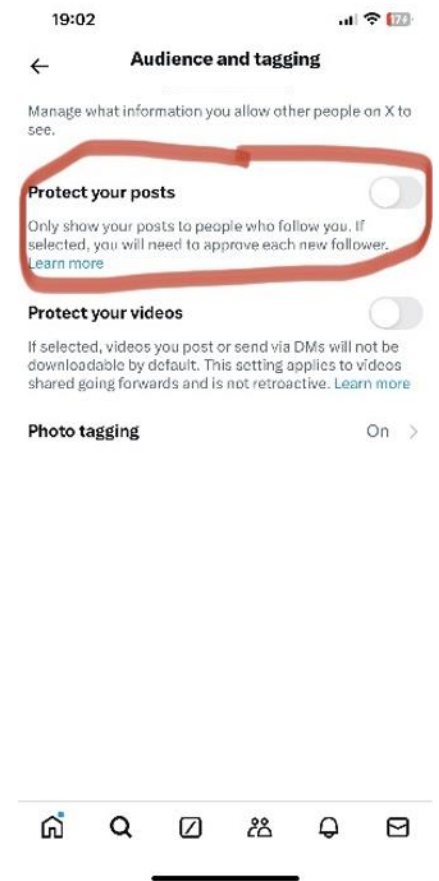
From our review we make the following notes

- **Concerns with X (Twitter)**: While the schools use X (Twitter) to engage with parents and share updates, the platform poses specific challenges. X has become notorious for issues such as trolling, racism, and sexism, which can easily seep into interactions. The open nature of X means there is limited control over who can follow accounts, making it difficult to prevent suspicious or harmful users from accessing content, including images of students. Unlike other platforms, X also has fewer safeguards to block inappropriate accounts or manage interactions, which increases the risk of exposure to offensive or harmful content.

- **Instagram is safer**: In contrast, Instagram potentially offers stricter security and privacy controls, making it a safer platform for sharing school-related updates. Instagram provides more robust tools to control who can follow the account and allows easier reporting and blocking of inappropriate content (as long as these are used effectively). This helps reduce the risk of students and staff being exposed to harmful users. The visual nature of Instagram, paired with its stronger content moderation policies, makes it a more secure platform for the school use.

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- **Focus on safety**: To ensure our students' and staff's safety, we recommend being particularly cautious when using X (Twitter) due to these risks. If the school wishes to continue to use X we suggest putting in some safeguards.

We suggest that schools revise their policies and practice in relation to social media safety, following these recommendations:

- **Engage safely:** social media can be a great way to share classroom achievements, celebrate students' work, and keep parents and carers updated on school news and events. However, it's important to always put safety first when using these platforms with children.

- **Considering using one account for the whole school:** Instead of having separate accounts for each class, it's safer to use one main school account. This makes it easier to manage and control the followers, to ensure everything is kept secure and appropriate. Without over-burdening the class teachers for extra checks.

- **Monitor followers:** Regularly check who is following the school's social media account. Any suspicious, anonymous, or adult-content accounts should be blocked immediately. Turning on relevant privacy settings will enable accounts to approve followers and keep content to a more restricted audience, this can be done through turning the 'protect your posts' setting on as seen below:

- Keep it secure: Make sure the school's social media account has the right privacy settings in place, so only authorised people can view the posts.

- Stay vigilant: Always review and filter the content shared on the school's account to make sure it's safe and suitable for everyone.

If you are interested in further information or guidance in implementing this guide, you can contact the authors.