

# Local parent wary of social media usage at elementary school

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A Georgetown parent is questioning the online safety measures a local school is putting in place to keep sensitive information out of the hands of predators.

The school, St. Francis of Assisi, utilizes Facebook, Twitter and YouTube pages to keep parents, students and teachers in the loop of happenings at the school, such as fire alarms and class events. The accounts are open, meaning anyone - even someone without a Twitter account - and can read what's happening at the school.

"Why is there no security?" A parent, who will not be identified for their children's sake, told the Independent. "You try and teach kids to be safe online, yet their page is open to any prowler."

At the beginning of the

school year, paperwork is sent home with each child regarding a number of things, one of them being social media. On a fairly consistent basis, St. Francis, and its teachers, will post photos of the classroom, some including children, and some with full names displayed.

One of the photos featured the name of this parent's daughter, open for anyone to see. As of Sept. 25, the photo was taken from the account.

"I signed papers under the bad assumption (the school) was putting security measures in place," the parent said. "I just don't get how a Twitter account is helping parents or the kids."

Mark Witter, principal at St. Francis, said the school Twitter account is used to keep people informed.

"We like to share the good things happening at the school," he said.

He confirmed at the beginning of the year, paperwork is sent home to be signed by parents, and that paperwork is good for that school year. Should any parent decide to exclude their child from social media posts, staff always make an effort to make sure they are not included in any photos.

"We want to be a good model for students and show them the way to being a good digital citizen," Witter said.

Locking the account, or having people send a request to follow the account, would make the page difficult to manage and would be taking away an avenue for parents to see what's happening, he explained.

After hearing some of the concerns, Witter said he talked to a representative from the Halton Catholic District School Board (HCDSB). Messages were left for the representative,



Shutterstock photo

**A local parent has some concerns regarding a Georgetown elementary school's protocol for sharing material on social media, namely Twitter.**

but were not returned.

According to the HCDSB social media information page, there are a number of rules regarding its use, such as not to use social media for personal attacks, not to post anything the world shouldn't see and not to spam others.

The school board also lists under basic rules that any personal information will not be shared in any public reports or documents.

Similarly, the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board follows similar guidelines, and also has a Twitter and YouTube

account.

The Georgetown parent was pleased to see the photo of their daughter's name taken down, but they are looking for more.

"These are our kids," they said. "Practice what we preach to them about online safety."

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You can also visit our Milton Information Centre - see details (and full meeting schedule) at [cnmilton.ca](http://cnmilton.ca). RSVP (small group meeting only): [milton@cn.ca](mailto:milton@cn.ca) or 1.800.216.9466.

### Halton Hills open house (drop-in)

Date	Time	Location
Monday, October 16	6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.	Mold-Masters SportsPlex – 221 Guelph Street, Georgetown (Gordon Alcott Heritage Hall)

For more information, including a summary of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and fact sheets regarding key studies, visit [cnmilton.ca](http://cnmilton.ca). View the full EIS at [ceaa.gc.ca](http://ceaa.gc.ca), Ref. Number 80100.