



Social Networking Policy

This policy addresses issues in relation to:

Safe and Supportive Environment – Student Welfare 3.6.2

(See also Policies on Code of Conduct and Information Technology (IT), Computer, Telephone and Electronic Equipment)

Introduction

This Policy is intended as directions to the school's staff regarding the use of social networking platforms in the course of their employment or dealings with the school and its students. It also provides instruction on what must not occur when using any social media whilst associated with the school. It clearly outlines that a breach of the policy may result in the school taking disciplinary action.

This policy is to be provided to employees.

1. Introduction to this Policy

1.1 Accessing Social Network Sites on School Systems

As outlined in the Information Technology (IT), Computer, Telephone and Electronic Equipment policy, staff are not permitted to use social networking sites on School Systems unless they have been specifically authorised to do so by the Head of College / Executive Principal or Head of College / Executive Principal's Delegate.

If staff have been authorised to access Social Media using School Systems the policy will apply to any such access. In particular, any use of Social Media on School Systems will be subject to logging and monitoring (refer to Section 4 of the Information Technology (IT), Computer, Telephone and Electronic Equipment policy).

1.2 Application

This Policy applies to employees when they participate in social networking sites whether during work hours or outside of work hours on their own computers or other electronic communication technologies or on School Systems if they have been authorised to do so.

This Policy covers all current and future social media platforms. These platforms currently include, but are not limited to:

- a) **Social networking sites:** Facebook, MySpace, Foursquare, LinkedIn, Bebo and Friendster;
- b) **Video and photo sharing websites:** Flickr and YouTube;
- c) **Micro-blogging sites:** Twitter;
- d) **Blogs:** including corporate blogs and personal blogs or blogs hosted by traditional media publications;



- e) **Forums and discussion boards:** e.g. local discussion boards, Whirlpool, Yahoo! Groups or Google Groups;
- f) **Online encyclopedias:** e.g. Wikipedia and Sidewiki; and
- g) any other websites that allow individual users or companies to use simple publishing tools (together called Social Media).

1.3 Consequences of a Breach of this Policy

Using Social Media in a way which breaches this Policy, the Information Technology (IT), Computer, Telephone and Electronic Equipment policy, the Code of Conduct, any other School policies or obligations as an employee or contractor under the law may result in disciplinary action being taken.

2. Employees Use of Social Media

If staff are required by the School to participate in Social Media sites as part of their role within the School, staff should ensure that they clearly understand what is required of them as outlined in the Code of Conduct Policy.

Staff should always exercise responsibility and judgment in any material they post on Social Media sites where they are participating as part of their role within the School. Essentially the rules that apply to staff when they are interacting face to face with people as a representative of the School will apply to their actions on Social Media – including all School policies. Similarly the normal authorisation and approval process in relation to any content that they are posting will also apply.

Staff should be polite and respectful of the opinions of others at all times and refrain from posting any comments which harshly criticise or undermine posts made by others. Staff should be careful of what they say about others and do not post comments which may be viewed as denigrating or insulting including to other schools.

3. Personal Use of Social Media

3.1 Use of Social Media

The School understands that staff use various Social Media for personal reasons on their own computers or other electronic communication technologies or on School Systems if they have been authorised to do so.

Generally what staff do during their own time is their own business. However, information they provide, and statements they make, on Social Media sites may impact the workplace and have significant consequences. This material may be read by others in the School community or the public at large. Once information is published online, it is essentially part of a permanent record, even if staff 'remove/delete' it later or attempt to make it anonymous.

When using any Social Media, staff are responsible for their words and actions.

It is the responsibility of staff to ensure that their posts are appropriate. Staff should always use good judgment and common sense, and if there is any doubt, do not post.

When using any Social Media, staff must not:



- a) invite students or their parents to join their personal social networking site or accept a students' or parents' invitation to join theirs;
- b) communicate with students on social networking sites;
- c) post photos of students or parents on social networking sites;
- d) use the School's logo or create School branded accounts which could be interpreted as representing the School;
- e) contribute anything which would bring staff or the School into disrepute – for example an offensive blog or photo;
- f) engage in any conduct that would not be acceptable in the workplace - for example:
 - i. making any adverse, offensive or derogatory statements about other staff, students, parents or the Management of the School; or
 - ii. engaging in unlawful discrimination, harassment or bullying of other staff, students, parents or the Management of the School; and
- g) disclose any confidential information about the School, including information about other staff, students, parents or the Management of the School.

The above requirements apply regardless of whether staff have restricted access to their personal site to selected persons only.

Staff should also avoid identifying or discussing co-workers or posting photographs that include co-workers unless they have obtained their permission first.

3.2 Expressing Personal Views

Staff should be aware when talking as an individual, people may perceive them to be talking on behalf of the School. By identifying oneself as a School employee, staff are creating perceptions about their expertise and about the School. Accordingly, staff need to be careful that all content associated with them does not conflict with School policies and their obligations as an employee or contractor.

Just because conduct is outside work or because staff have not clearly identified themselves as a School employee, it may nonetheless be in breach of staff obligations to the School as an employee or contractor, whether on Social Media or otherwise. Staff should exercise caution and common sense on that basis.

This policy is not designed to infringe upon the personal interaction or online conversations of staff where they are clearly speaking as an individual with no reference to the School or their position as a School employee, provided they are otherwise complying with the School's policies and staff obligations as an employee.

3.3 Personal liability

Please bear in mind that information staff provide, and statements made, on Social Media could have significant consequences for staff personally, for example:

- a) making statements about an individual may constitute defamation (in which case a staff member may be personally liable under applicable legislation to the person about whom the statement was made about);
- b) making statements may constitute unlawful discrimination, harassment or bullying (in which case the staff member may be personally liable under applicable legislation);



- c) making statements about the School, its business, parents or students, may constitute a breach of a staff members obligation not to disclose confidential information and obligation not to make public statements about or on the School's behalf without express authority; and
- d) using other persons' material, text, photographs, music, logos and trademarks may breach copyright laws.

4. General

4.1.

The terms and prescribed conduct described in this Policy are not intended to be exhaustive, nor do they anticipate every possible use of Social Media. Staff are encouraged to act with caution and to take into account the underlying principles of this Policy. If staff feel unsure about what to do in particular circumstances, they should contact the Head of College / Executive Principal or Head of College / Executive Principal's Delegate.

4.2.

This Policy sets out the rules which must be complied with when using Social Media. This Policy is a direction to staff by the School as an employee of the School. If staff do not comply with this Policy, the School may take disciplinary action, in line with the College's Code of Conduct policy.

Revision History

Version	Policy Date	Review date of policy	Notes
1.0	January 2024	January 2025	<i>Amendments to this policy will be made based on updated legislative requirements or changes to school needs</i>
2.0	January 2025	January 2027	<i>Amendments to this policy will be made based on updated legislative requirements or changes to school needs</i>