

# Social Media Policy

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## Rationale

The purpose of this policy is to encourage acceptable and beneficial use of social media by staff employed at St Mary's Catholic Primary School (the **School**). It is recognised that most employees may use or interact with social media at work and in a personal context.

There is great potential for the use of social media in school communities in terms of educational outcomes and as a means of communication.

However, employees also need to understand the expectations of the School when using social media in a professional and personal capacity as there are also workplace risks that must be appropriately managed.

## Social Media Risks

The following are some of the major risks associated with the use of social media:

- reputational damage to organisations and people;
- disclosure of confidential information and breach of privacy laws;
- posting of offensive, bullying, harassing, and discriminatory material;
- misuse of intellectual property and breach of copyright laws; and
- for teachers, breaching the *Victorian Teaching Profession Code of Conduct* issued by the Victorian Institute of Teaching.

## What is Social Media?

Social media is any form of online or web-based publication, forum or presence that allows interactive communication, including, but not limited to, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, blogs, forums, discussion boards, chat rooms, Wikis, Twitter and YouTube.

## Guiding Principles

Employees must recognise:

- online behaviour should at all times demonstrate respect for the dignity of each person;
- the need to behave in an ethical manner when using social media (even for personal communication) as those communications can reflect on their role at the School and must be consistent with the Catholic beliefs and ethos of the School and professional expectations and standards;
- their ability to serve as a positive role model for students and as a representative of the School is a critical aspect of their employment; and
- social media activities may be visible to current, past or prospective staff, students and parents.

**“Golden rules”:** Employees will avoid the potential of breaching this policy and compromising the professional expectations of them at the School if they do not use personal social media forums to:

- post any material about the School (eg. students, parents, policies, employees etc); or
- post inappropriate material about themselves; or
- make inappropriate contact with members of the school community.

## **Work-related use of Social Media**

### Student Learning

The use of online learning communities by employees for educational purposes must be in accordance with other relevant School policies and procedures relating to online learning.

### Generally

When using social media for work related purposes, employees must:

- first obtain the consent of the Principal (which can be for a specific instance or for a general purpose or role) before:
  - posting any material that may be perceived as being made “on behalf” of the School (eg. any commentary, School information, photographs of the School, students, staff or other identifying images); and
  - using the School’s logo, trademarks, official photographs or any other intellectual property of proprietary materials; and
- not post inappropriate material or commentary that breaches other policies outlining expected behaviours of employees at the School.

If there could be reasonable concerns that posting any material could be considered inappropriate (eg. in light of potential privacy or copyright obligations), then an employee must first raise those concerns with the Principal before posting the material.

## **Personal use of Social Media**

### Generally

It is recognised that employees may use social media in their personal life. However, it is also recognised that such use may impact on the employment relationship.

Accordingly, employees’ personal use of social media must:

- not bring the School into disrepute or interfere with, or compromise their duties or responsibilities to the School or students;
- comply with other policies of the School and professional standards that outline expected behaviours of employees when posting personal comments that relate to, or can be identified as relating to, School issues (eg. discussing or referencing employees, students, policies or anything related to, or reflecting upon the School); and
- take steps to ensure that friends, family or other acquaintances are aware of the need to use discretion when they post images or information about the employee on their own social media forums.

To avoid potentially breaching this policy or compromising the professional expectations of them as employees at the School, it is recommended that employees' use of social media not involve connections with the following persons on social media forums (for example, being "friends" on Facebook):

- recent former students (ie. enrolled at the School within a two year period before connecting); or
- parents of current students;

unless special circumstances exist (eg. a parent is a personal friend or former student is a relative) and the employee has advised the Principal of the connection and the circumstances.

### Students

Employees must NOT connect with students or interact with, or post images of, students on their own private social media forums (for example, employees must not be "friends" with students on Facebook).

An exception to this requirement is when prior approval for the connection has been obtained from the Principal on the basis that an employee and a student will appropriately interact within the valid context of a legitimate purpose (for example, both are family members/relatives or both are members of a community sporting team and interactions are purely for the purpose of participating in that sport).

### **Security, Privacy and Access**

To avoid potentially breaching this policy or compromising the professional expectations of them as employees at the School, it is recommended that employees:

- ensure the privacy settings of their social media profiles are appropriately set to avoid putting their privacy at risk (for example, minimum recommendation for Facebook accounts: settings set to "only friends" and NOT "Friends of Friends" or "Networks and Friends" as these open your content to a large group of unknown people); and
- recognise that even if they implement the maximum security settings for their social media profiles, the security settings on social media forums cannot guarantee that communications placed online do not become more publicly available than was intended (employees should always assume that posts or communications online may become public).

Employees must understand that the type of security settings used cannot excuse breaches of this policy if the material posted is inappropriate and becomes more publicly available than was intended.

### **Consequences of Breaching this Policy**

Non-compliance with this policy may be grounds for disciplinary action. Depending on the seriousness of the circumstances, disciplinary action can be up to and including termination of employment.