

Presentation College, Currylea, Tuam.

Social Media Policy

Introduction

This policy and associated guidance was drafted in consultation with the staff, parents and pupils to protect staff and pupils and to advise school leadership on how to deal with potential inappropriate use of social networking sites. For example, our use of social networking applications has implications for our duty to safeguard the children in our care each day. The policy requirements in this document aim to create a balanced approach to support innovation in learning whilst providing a framework of good practice.

We currently live in a digital age in which social media has become a powerful set of communication tools. These are changing the way we teach, learn and interact with one another. The collective sharing of material, views or comments with a large cohort of individuals was never so easy. These resources if harnessed constructively can be hugely beneficial in the educational field. As a school community we are committed to developing the technological and communications skills of our students.

Relation to Mission Statement

This policy has been developed in line with the school's Mission Statement which advocates a caring learning environment for students and staff. As the school embraces new technologies of the digital age there is an increasing need to raise awareness around respect for the individual and the safety of those engaging with these communication tools.

Scope

This policy covers the use of social networking applications by all pupils and staff in our school. The requirements of this policy apply to all uses of social media which are used for any school related purpose and regardless of whether the persons involved are contributing in an official capacity to social media applications provided by external organisations. Social media applications include, **but are not limited to:**

- Blogs, e.g. Blogger Twitter
- Online discussion forums, e.g. netmums.com
- Collaborative spaces e.g. Facebook
- Media sharing services e.g. You Tube

All school representatives should bear in mind that information they share through social networking applications, even if they are on private spaces, are still subject to copyright, data protection and Freedom of Information legislation etc.

Roles and Responsibilities

1. The Board of Management will approve the policy and ensure its development and evaluation.
2. The Principal and Deputy Principal will be responsible for the dissemination of the policy and the application of consequences.
3. Year Heads will outline unacceptable uses of Social Media to students and advising them of safe internet use.
4. Class Tutors and Year Heads will be alert to the signs and possibilities of Bullying within their groups.
5. Strategies to ensure online safety will be taught as part of the SPHE anti-bullying programme.
6. Subject Teachers will report any incidents of online bullying and be mindful of their obligations under Child Protection Guidelines.
7. The Guidance Counsellor and Student Support Team will provide support for students who have been victims of online bullying.

Safe and Responsible use of Social Media

In the social media world the line between private and public is not well defined nor is the line between personal and professional.

- a) Be **selective** about what you share. Everything online happens in front of a vast, invisible, and often anonymous audience. Once something is out there, it does not go away as it can be copied and forwarded easily and quickly. Everything leaves a digital footprint. You should never post personal details such as your phone number, email address or home address.
- b) **Be selective with friends.** Be careful who you make friends with online. In general it is better to restrict friends to people you know and trust in the real world.

- c) **Never post your location.** Facebook lets users post their location on every post. Teens should not do this for safety and privacy reasons. Teens can also “tag” their friends’ location but you can prevent anyone from tagging your location in How Tags Work section.
- d) **Use strict privacy settings.** Review all of the options on your privacy settings page. Many sites default settings tend to keep information public until a user makes it private (although Facebook is a little stricter with minors’ accounts). “Friends Only” is a good choice for most items, but you can be even more selective.
- e) If your profile is linked to your mobile phone, you should use the website’s privacy settings to ensure that your phone number is not visible.
- f) **Chat and VoIP services (These allow for communication that may be typed or spoken with or without webcam access).** When using these you should only communicate with people you trust and remember that other people may be able to view all aspects of the communication.
- g) Adults in contact with pupils should therefore understand and be aware that safe practice also involves using judgement and integrity about behaviours in places other than the work setting.

Communication between pupils / school staff

1. Communication between pupils and staff, by whatever method, should take place within clear explicit professional boundaries. This includes the wider use of technology such as mobile phones, text messaging, e-mails, digital cameras, videos, web-cams, websites and blogs.
2. The school has provided an e-mail address for communication between staff and pupils. Staff should not give their personal mobile numbers or personal e-mail addresses to pupils or parents.
3. Staff should not request, or respond to, any personal information from a pupil, other than that which might be appropriate as part of their professional role.
4. Members of the school community need to ensure that when they are communicating about others, even outside of school, that they give due regard to the potential for defamation of character. Making allegations on social networking sites about others connected with the school could result in formal action being taken against them. This includes the uploading of photographs which might bring the school into disrepute.

Guidelines for staff on Personal use of Social Media websites from the Teaching Council Code of Conduct

Teachers shall

- 3.3.6 Communicate effectively with pupils/students, colleagues, parents, school management and others in a manner that is professional, collaborative and supportive, and based on trust and respect.
- 3.3.7 Ensure that any communication with pupils/students, colleagues, parents, school management and others is appropriate, including communication via electronic media, such as e-mail, texting and social networking sites.
- 3.3.8 Ensure that they do not access, download or otherwise have in their possession while engaged in school activities, in appropriate materials/images in electronic or other format
- 3.3.9 Ensure that they do not access, download or otherwise have in their possession, at any time or in any place, illegal materials/images in electronic or other format.

Guidelines for staff on the use of Social Media sites

Personal use of Social Media

Use of these sites by staff in school is governed by the school AUP Policy and the recently published “Draft Code of Professional Conduct” from the Teaching Council.

All telephone contact with parents should be made through the school landline phone or the school mobile phone.

Educational use by staff:

Social Media sites can offer educational opportunities for collaboration on projects, presentation of ideas and sharing of class materials and resources. Staff should be guided by the following principles when incorporating Social Media into their teaching.

- The starting point for all Social Media interaction should be via a link in your Subject Department section on the school’s website.
- The educational advantage of the use of the Social Media site in question should be clear and permission sought from the school Principal before use.

- Material that is confidential in nature such as student names, grades etc. should never be posted.
- ‘Groups’ should be used with collaborating on Facebook. Membership of these can be strictly controlled and users do not have to be friends of other users or the group’s creator.
- Pay strict attention to intellectual property and copyright laws.
- All students participating in the online collaboration should be advised of their responsibility to use the site appropriately.
- Staff is expected to exercise sound judgement and maintain the highest professional standards while using Social Media in the school.

Unacceptable uses of Social Media sites and their consequences

Users are responsible for their own behaviour when communicating with social media and will be held accountable for their content of the communications that they post on social media locations.

Unacceptable use of Social Media sites will include:

- Sending or posting discriminatory, harassing, negative comments, threatening messages or images that may cause harm to any member of the school community.
- Forwarding or ‘Liking’ material that is likely to cause offence or hurt to a third party.
- Sending or posting messages or material that could damage the school’s image or reputation.
- Creating a fake profile that impersonates any other member of the school community.
- Sending or posting material that is confidential to the school.
- Uses that violates copyright law, fail to observe licensing agreements or infringe on others intellectual property rights.
- Participating in the viewing or exchange of inappropriate images or obscene material.
- Plagiarism should be avoided and credit should always be given to the original author.

While all cases involving the inappropriate use of social media will be dealt with on an individual basis, the school and its Board of Management considers the above to be serious breaches of our Code of Behaviour.

Disciplinary action will be taken in the case of inappropriate use of social media tools.

Sanctions for Policy infringements

Infringements of this policy may have disciplinary repercussions, including, (but not exclusively):

- Suspension of network and computer privileges
- Confiscation of devices if found on school grounds or on school related activities
- Notification to parents
- Detention
- Suspension from school and/or school-related activities
- Exclusion in the case of serious misconduct which brings the school into disrepute or defames, slanders or bullies any member of the school community. This especially applies, but not exclusively, to any student who sets up a facility or contributes or allows material to be sourced for the purpose of degrading, bullying or humiliating any member of the school community.
- Legal action and/or prosecution.

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be monitored by the Policy Review Team in the school. Reviews will be undertaken as deemed necessary.

Date of implementation: February 25th 2019