



## Social Media Policy

### Rationale

The purpose of this policy is to encourage acceptable and beneficial use of social media by staff employed at **St Mary's Primary 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;
- posting of offensive, bullying, harassing, and discriminatory material;
- misuse of intellectual property; 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.

### 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;

- take into consideration the age and developmental level of students;
- incorporate clear instructions to students about their responsibility for appropriate interaction and content online;
- have the consent of parents/guardians;
- respect students' rights to privacy in academic work, records and results when posting online; and
- not be linked to students' or employees' own personal social media forums.

### **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;
- comply with copyright and privacy laws and obligations; and
- not post inappropriate material or commentary that breaches other policies outlining expected behaviours of employees at the School.

### **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 themselves or the School into disrepute or interfere with, or impede, an employee's 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);
- 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; and
- 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 and prior approval from the Principal has been obtained.

### **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).

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

Employees must:

- 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);
- 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); and
- therefore, understand that the type of security settings used by an employee cannot be used as an excuse for breaching this policy if the material posted becomes more publicly available than was intended.

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

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

### **Related Policies**

The Social Media Policy has linkages to other relevant School policies and professional expectations, for example:

- ***Code of Conduct/Behaviour Policy***
- ***Victorian Teaching Profession Code of Conduct issued by the Victorian Institute of Teaching***
- ***Anti-Bullying Policy***
- ***Electronic Media Policy***
- ***Duty of care Policy***
- ***Privacy Policy***

### **Policy Review**

This Policy will be reviewed every **two years** to take account of any changed technology, legislation, expectations or practices.