St Mary's Catholic Primary School
Social Media Policy

St Mary's Catholic Primary School is a school which operates with the consent of the Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne and is owned, operated and governed by Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools Ltd (MACS), where formation and education are based on the principles of Catholic doctrine, and where the teachers are outstanding in true doctrine and uprightness of life.

Rationale

St Mary's Parish Primary School recognises the importance of engaging within and outside of our community in order to engage, collaborate, learn and share via social media platforms. These platforms include, but are not limited to, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and other online tools through which individuals connect and share information. There is great potential for the use of social media in school communities in terms of educational outcomes and as a means of communication.

All members of the St Mary's Parish Primary School community are expected to uphold the mission and values of the school in all Social Media interactions. This includes interacting in a way that creates a positive digital reputation for the school and its individual members.

Therefore, it is expected that St Mary's Parish Primary School staff, students and parents/caregivers use any social media platform in a respectful and responsible manner.

Aim

The aim of the Social Media Policy is to outline standards of behaviour for the use of Social Media that are consistent with the values and expectations of St Mary's Parish Primary School. The school aims to protect the e-safety and wellbeing of staff, students and the school community. If there is a breach of the St Mary's Parish Primary School's Social Media Policy the school will undertake action and concerns will be dealt with on a case by case basis. All reports of cyberbullying and other technology misuses will be investigated fully and may result in a notification to police where the school is required to do so.

What is Social Media?

Social media refers to the means of interactions among people in which they create, share, and exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks. It is any form of online or web-based platform or application, forum or presence that allows interactive communication, including, but not limited to, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Google Currents, LinkedIn, blogs, forums, discussion boards, chat rooms, and YouTube. It can also include SMS, emails and mobile devices.

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 staff, breaching the *Victorian Teaching Profession Code of Conduct* issued by the Victorian Institute of Teaching.

Rights and Responsibilities

Staff, students and parents/caregivers are expected to show respect to all members of the school community.

Staff will: Plan for the inclusion of eSmart awareness within the curriculum with guidance from relevant education authorities and the ICT Leader.

Parents/Caregivers will: Be responsible for being aware of and informed about their children's online activity and be proactive in the supervision and guidance of their children taking into account this policy and in particular the school's mission and values.

STUDENT GUIDELINES

When using Social Media, students are expected to ensure that they:

- read and agree to the terms and conditions of various Social media sites as many of them have age restrictions for their use. Eg Facebook, Instagram and TikTok are all restricted to those **13 years of age and above**.
- are aware of what they are posting online and that Social Media sites and applications are public forums.
- are not permitted to join a staff member's areas on networking sites. If students attempt to do this, the member of staff is to refuse the student access and inform the Principal. The student's parents/caregivers will be informed of the breach.
- will not access social networking sites during the school working day without permission from a member of the School teaching staff.
- do not post content that is hateful, threatening, pornographic, or incites violence against others.
- respect the rights and confidentiality of others.
- follow St Mary's Parish Primary School's Code of Conduct when writing online.
- do not impersonate or falsely represent another person.
- remain safe online and never give out personal information. This includes last names, phone numbers, addresses, exact birth dates and pictures.
- do not bully, intimidate, abuse, harass or threaten others.
- do not make defamatory comments.
- do not use offensive or threatening language or resort to personal abuse towards each other or members of the school community
- do not harm the reputation of St Mary's Parish Primary School or those within its community
- do not upload video, audio or photographs of any member of the St Mary's Parish Primary school community (student, staff and parent/caregivers) without seeking and gaining appropriate permission.
- do not upload any video or photographs of any student where they can be identified as a St Mary's Parish Primary School student by their uniform or any other means.

PARENT/CAREGIVER GUIDELINES

Social Media tools open up communication between staff, students and parents/caregivers. This kind of communication and collaboration can have a large impact on learning at St Mary's Parish Primary School. The school encourages parents/caregivers to participate in such activities when appropriate but requests that parents/caregivers act responsibly and respectfully at all times, understanding that their conduct not only reflects on the school community, but will be a model for our students as well.

Parents/caregivers should adhere to the following guidelines:

- Be aware that many Social Media sites have age restrictions that **HAS** implications for their primary aged children. Parents/caregivers need to monitor their children's online social media activity, and read the terms and conditions of various Social Media sites and applications their children are interested in using. Parents/caregivers need to be aware that many of them have age restrictions for their use. e.g. Facebook, Instagram and TikTok are all restricted to those 13 years of age and above.
- Parents/caregivers need to be aware that they are in breach of terms and conditions if they set up a personal account for their children to use if they knowingly understand that age restrictions apply.
- Before uploading photos, audio or video, parents/caregivers need to seek appropriate permission from any individual involved. This most particularly applies in relation to the privacy of the staff of St Mary's Parish Primary School
- Online postings and conversations are not private. Do not share confidential information, internal school discussions, or specific information about students, staff or other parents.
- Be conscious of the fact that expert advice given is that all users of Social Media sites should do whatever they can to not identify any child by name or associate them with a particular school.
- Parents/caregivers will be asked to sign a consent form for students when teachers set up social media activities for school promotion or classroom learning use.
- Parents/caregivers will not attempt to destroy or harm any information online.
- Parents/caregivers will not use classroom social media sites for any illegal activity, including violation of data privacy laws.
- Parents/caregivers are highly encouraged to read and/or participate in social media activities. Parents/caregivers should not distribute any information that might be deemed personal about other students participating in the social media activities. This includes photographs.
- Parents/caregivers should not upload or include any information that does not also meet the student guidelines above.
- Parents/caregivers should not participate in spreading false or unsubstantiated rumours or false information in regards to the St Mary's Parish community and its members.
- Parents/caregivers assisting with classroom activities should not make use of social media sites while involved in such activities.

STAFF AND TEACHER GUIDELINES

The purpose of this policy is to encourage acceptable and beneficial use of social media by staff employed at St Mary's Parish Primary School. However, staff 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.

It is recognised that most staff may use or interact with social media at work and in a personal context. Social Media in relation to staff relates to and is not limited to Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, podcasts, digital images and video, instant messaging and mobile devices.

- Online behavior should at all times demonstrate a 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
- Staff need to serve as a positive role model for students and as a representative of the School is a critical aspect of their employment
- Staff need to understand that Social media activities may be visible to current, past or prospective staff, students and parents.
- Social networking sites such as Facebook or Instagram must not be used by staff as a platform for learning activities with students.
- Staff must NOT connect with students or interact with, or post images of, students on their own private social media forums (for example, staff must not be "friends" with students on Facebook).
- Staff and student online interaction must occur only in an educational context.
- Staff are advised to NOT accept ex-students or parents of current students as friends on personal Social Media sites.
- Staff must not discuss students or colleagues or publicly criticise school policies or personnel on social networking sites.
- While staff have permission to post photographs of students to the platforms listed on the permissions, they do not have permission to post details that would identify any child.
- Staff are personally responsible for content they publish online. Staff need to be mindful that what they publish will create a digital footprint.
- Staff online behaviour should reflect the same standards of honesty, respect, and consideration consistent with the standards that apply on school premises and in accordance with the school's mission and values.
- The lines between public and private, personal and professional can be blurred in the online world. If staff identify themselves online as affiliated with St Mary's Parish Primary School then they need to be aware that they are by definition representing the entire school community. Staff should ensure that content associated with them is consistent with their work at the school and the school's mission and values.
- Staff should not participate in spreading false or unsubstantiated rumours or false information in regards to the St Mary's Parish community and its members.
- When contributing online, staff should not post confidential student information.
- Staff should visit their profile's security and privacy settings on social networking sites.

Work-related use of Social Media

Student Learning

- The use of online learning communities by staff 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/caregivers
    - respect students' rights to privacy in academic work, records and results when posting online
    - not be linked to students' or staff' own personal social media forum

Generally when using social media for work related purposes, staff 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)
    - using the School's logo, trademarks, official photographs or any other intellectual property of proprietary materials
    - comply with copyright and privacy laws and obligations
    - not post inappropriate material or commentary that breaches other policies outlining expected behaviours of staff at the School.

Personal use of Social Media

It is recognised that staff may use social media in their personal life. However, it is also recognised that such use may impact on the employment relationship. Accordingly, staff's personal use of social media must:

- not bring themselves or the School into disrepute or interfere with, or impede, a staff members duties or responsibilities to the School or students
- comply with other policies of the School and professional standards that outline expected behaviours of staff when posting personal comments that relate to, or can be identified as relating to, School issues (eg. discussing or referencing staff, 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 staff member on their own social media forums
- 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/caregivers of current students; unless special circumstances exist and prior approval from the Principal has been obtained.

Security, Privacy and Access

Staff 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 (staff should always assume that posts or communications online may become public)
- understand that the type of security settings used by an staff member cannot be used as an excuse for breaching this policy if the material posted becomes more publicly available than was intended

MANAGING CHANGE AND ISSUES ARISING

We acknowledge that technology changes rapidly. If any member of the St Mary's Parish Primary School community has a concern or question pertaining to Social Media or Social Networking sites, this should be directed to the Principal. Parents, students or staff who have a complaint or issue arise from Social Media should contact the Principal.

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.

Supporting Documentation

St Mary's Parish Primary School Communication Policy [Communication Policy 2012 Reviewed 2019](#)

St Mary's Parish Primary School Parent/Caregiver/Student Behavioural Standards Policy
[Parent, Caregiver and Student Behavioural Standards Policy](#)

DEECD Guide to Using Social Media https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/social-media/policy

DEECD Information, Communications and Technology (ICT) Resources Acceptable Use Policy [DEECD Acceptable Use Policy](#)

Child Safe Standards: Creating a safe environment
http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/health/childprotection/Pages/safeenviro.aspx

Office of the eSafety Commissioner https://www.esafety.gov.au/educators

Australian Communications & Media Authority https://www.acma.gov.au/

Alannah and Madeline Foundation: eSmart https://www.esmart.org.au/what-is-esmart/

Commissioner for Privacy and Data Protection
https://www.cpdp.vic.gov.au/images/content/pdf/privacy_info/20170220_CPDP_Social_Media_Privacy_FAQs.pdf

The Victorian Teaching Profession Code of Conduct
https://www.vit.vic.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0018/35604/Code-of-Conduct-2016.pdf

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's four year cycle of review (2024)