



POLICY NO	POLICY TITLE
26	Social Media Awareness and Acceptable Use Policy

### DOCUMENT CONTROL

This Policy Document has been prepared by the Board of Management (BOM) in consultation with the Staff of St Paul's Primary School and taking into account all relevant legislation/circulars.

### REVISION HISTORY

REVISION NO	DESCRIPTION	APPROVED BY	DATE
REV 1	FIRST ISSUE	BOM	March 2020

NEXT REVIEW NO LATER THAN	March 2023
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## Introduction

The purpose of this policy document is to inform staff of best practice when posting on social media and digital channels.

The Board of Management is responsible for overseeing this policy and its implementation.

The Digital Age provides us all with an opportunity to communicate widely in real-time and across multiple digital channels and devices. We can share content, opinions and third-party information. However, with this opportunity, comes a responsibility to respect others, share facts only and remain courteous at all times.

This policy has been developed to assist all employees of St. Paul's Primary School Dooradoyle Limerick, (hereinafter referred to as "the School") in making ethical, respectful and acceptable decisions about their professional and personal social media usage and to provide clear direction on the importance of protecting the School's reputation and confidential information.

Social media refers to social and professional networking platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, YouTube, LinkedIn, Snapchat, Instagram, blogs, message boards and forums and other similar online facilities.

This policy is not intended to prevent employees from engaging in social media but are intended to inform employees as to what is considered by the School to constitute appropriate / inappropriate social media usage and conduct.

For those employees who are members of the School's teaching staff, this policy gives effect to agreed professional protocols as prescribed by the Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers (Teaching Council, June 2012) which provides that teachers should: -

"ensure that any communication with pupils/students, colleagues, parents, school management and others is appropriate, including communication via electronic media, such as email, texting and social networking sites." and

"ensure that they do not knowingly access, download or otherwise have in their possession while engaged in school activities, inappropriate materials/images in electronic or other format."

All employees should be mindful of what they post on social media, who can see it and how it can be linked back to the School and work colleagues. Misuse of social media can cause injury to others and can have a negative impact on the reputation of the School. Social media communications are never truly private as they are indexed in search engines and once information is published, it becomes part of a permanent record and is traceable. Staff should:

- Strive to add value to what others are doing and saying with your knowledge and insights. Avoid using ethnic or religious slurs, insults or obscenities.
- Be considerate of others' privacy and topics that could be considered personal.

Employees are at all times prohibited from using or publishing information on social media which has the potential to negatively impact / reflect on the School and / or its employees and / or its students e.g.:-

- Publishing defamatory, abusive or offensive material concerning any employee, volunteer, member of School management, parent(s), student(s), visitor or other member of the School community;
- Publishing any confidential or sensitive information concerning the School or members of the School community;
- Knowingly publishing fake news, which is a growing trend on social media. Staff should fact-check for accuracy any news or information before publishing.
- Publishing material that might reasonably be considered to have the effect of damaging the reputation of the School.

Data protection laws protect an employer where the employee's use of social networking sites causes damage to that organisation's reputation, or leads to the release of confidential information.

**REMEMBER:** You are legally liable for anything you publish on your own social networks.

The School reserves the right to take disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal, in respect of employees who engage in prohibited conduct and conduct in breach of this policy.

Given the ever developing and changing nature of social media and the internet, this policy will be reviewed and adapted as required

This policy should be read in conjunction with all other School policies that it might impact upon.

## **A. SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE ON A SOCIAL MEDIA SITE OR PROFILE ESTABLISHED IN THE COURSE OF EMPLOYMENT WHICH RELATES TO SCHOOL BUSINESS / MATTERS**

- (i) **Seek permission:** Employees must seek or have permission from the Principal / Deputy Principal(s) before setting up / registering in the School's name on social media sites, user groups, special interest forums and bulletin boards and/or using social media for teaching and learning purposes.
- (ii) **Property:** The property rights in a sanctioned social media account in the name of or on behalf of the School are vested in the School.
- (iii) **Responsibility:** A permitted employee is responsible for his/her social media usage, for ensuring that private and confidential information is respected and protected at all times and for compliance with the terms and conditions of the relevant social media platform.
- (iv) **Privacy & Confidential information:** Confidential information pertaining to the School, its employees, volunteers, students, parents and others in the School community must be respected and maintained at all times. Personal information about any students, parents, employees or volunteers must not be divulged or discussed on social media sites.
- (v) **Unacceptable use:** Employees must not create, publish, download or communicate material/content that could reasonably be regarded as defamatory, inappropriate, discriminatory, offensive, hostile, pornographic, damaging to the School's reputation or damaging to a third party. Uploading, forwarding or linking to the aforementioned content is also unacceptable. Employees must never reveal sensitive details whether relating to the School, its employees, volunteers, students, parents and other members of the School community on social media sites.
- (vi) **Behaviour:** Postings by an employee on a social media site that are defamatory, inappropriate, discriminatory, offensive, hostile, pornographic, divulging personal data without consent or damaging to the School's reputation will be addressed pursuant to the School's disciplinary procedure and may result in disciplinary sanction up to and including dismissal.

## **B. PERSONAL SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE**

- (i) **Boundaries:** Personal profiles should not be used to conduct school business or to communicate with students/parents. Online interaction with Management, other employees and/or school contacts should be appropriate and professional in nature. Employees must not use the official School e-mail address when participating in personal social media / social media that is not related to the employee's job.
- (ii) **Identity:** Where an employee chooses to identify him/herself on social media as an employee of the School, s/he must make it clear that his/her communications do not

represent the School, its ethos, position, opinions or views. The employee must write in the first person and state clearly s/he is posting in a personal capacity and not in the course of employment or on behalf of the School and state clearly that the views expressed are his/her own and not those of the School. At all times, employees should be mindful of their communications and possible consequences.

- (iii) Be mindful and respectful: Each employee must be mindful that his/her conduct, not only reflects on themselves, but also reflects on his/her professionalism and on the School. Each employee should exercise sound judgement, common sense and respect when participating in social media. An Employee should not use insulting, offensive or disparaging language. Employees may not always agree with others' views and opinions online but should always respect them. If in doubt, do not publish or post anything. Information published online is permanent and never completely private.
- (iv) Responsibility: Employees are personally responsible for their posts and actions on social media. Employees should only share information that you know to be true and be careful of fake news and sharing misinformation. Employees should be quick to correct mistakes and admit when they are wrong.
- (v) Privacy & Confidential information: The obligations detailed at A (iv) above apply also to employees' personal social media usage. Do not divulge or discuss confidential information pertaining to the School, its employees, volunteers, students, parents and others in the School community and personal information, including photographs, of third persons (including employees, students, parents and other members of the School community) must not be posted, divulged or discussed without the permission of the person concerned.
- (vi) Unacceptable use: Employees must not create, publish, download or communicate material/content that could reasonably be regarded as defamatory, inappropriate, discriminatory, offensive, hostile, pornographic, damaging to the School's reputation or damaging to a third party. Uploading, forwarding or linking to the aforementioned content is also unacceptable. Employees must never reveal sensitive details whether relating to the School, its employees, volunteers, students, parents and other members of the School community on social media sites.
- (vii) Behaviour: Postings by an employee on a social media site that are defamatory, inappropriate, discriminatory, offensive, hostile, pornographic, divulging personal data without consent or bring the School into disrepute will be addressed pursuant to the School's disciplinary procedure and may result in disciplinary sanction up to and including dismissal.

## **REPORTING**

Employees should immediately report to the Principal / Deputy Principal any inappropriate, abusive or defamatory or other unacceptable social media activity concerning the School, its employees, volunteers, students or other members of the School community. The reported activity will be reviewed and, where appropriate, the content will be reported using the relevant online reporting mechanism for the social media application.

## **ENFORCEMENT**

Non-compliance by employees with any aspect of this policy may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.