

St Fintina's Post Primary School Social Media Policy

Introduction

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 communication skills of our students.

Definition

Social Media is the term commonly used for websites or internet applications that allow people to interact with each other in some way – by sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interests. Websites such as Facebook, Ask.fm, and MySpace are perhaps the most well-known examples of Social Media sites but the term also covers other web based services such as blogs, video and audio podcasts, wikis, message boards, photo document and video sharing websites such as YouTube and micro blogging services such as Twitter. This definition of Social Media is not exhaustive as technology develops with new ways of communicating advancing every day.

Rationale

Unfortunately there is scope for irresponsible and inappropriate use of Social Media sites which can lead to bullying, harassment and illegal activity while online. This policy has been developed to offer guidance and direction to all members of the school community on the safe and responsible use of Social Media. This is also a reference document for victims of inappropriate or unsolicited comments online.

Relation to Mission Statement

This policy has been developed in line with the school's mission statement which advocates a safe and 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.

Relation to the E-Learning Vision

The policy of using up-to-date developments in technology to engage with students and members of the school community is in keeping with the e-learning vision of the school.

Aims

- Produce a set of strategies for students that will allow them to use Social Media safely and responsibly.
- Protect the integrity and good name of all members of the school community from online abuse.
- Outline behaviours which are unacceptable and the consequences for engaging in these.
- Provide guidance for staff on the appropriate use of Social Media.
- Outline procedures for school community members who find themselves the victims of inappropriate social media behaviour.

Scope

This policy applies to the entire school community – management, teachers, other staff, pupils and parents/guardians. Due to the diverse nature of access to Social Media it relates to all such interactions both during and outside of normal school hours and includes the use of school and personal devices

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. Class Tutors will outline unacceptable uses of Social Media to students and advising them of safe internet use.
4. Class Tutors will be alert to the signs and possibilities of Bullying within their groups.
5. The school through the HSCL service will organise courses and information sessions for parents on safe internet use.
6. Strategies to ensure online safety will be taught as part of the SPHE anti-bullying programme.
7. Subject Teachers will report any incidents of online bullying and be mindful of their obligations under Child protection Guidelines.
8. The Guidance Counsellor and Care 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 doesn't 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 the 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 & VoIP services. (These allow for communication that may be typed or spoken with or without webcam access)**
When using the above 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 / schools 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 VEC 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 the use of Social Media sites.

Personal use of Social Media

Use of these sites by staff in school is governed by Co. Meath V.E.C. I.T 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 when 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 the 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 another 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 steering committee and the pastoral team in the school. Reviews will be undertaken as deemed necessary. A major review will be undertaken five years subsequent to the date of implementation

Staff consulted: 5th December 2012

Students Consulted:

Parents consulted: 27th November 2012

BOM consulted:

Ratified by BOM:

Ratified by VEC:

Date of implementation:

Social Media Information

Definitions/Explanations

- **Blogs** are web journals where users can post text, videos, or audio content inviting others to comment on these entries.
- **Micro blogs** allow users to exchange small elements of content such as short sentences, individual images, or video links. These small messages are sometimes called *microposts*.
- **Social Networks** are websites where users can create profiles and form connections with other users.
- A **wiki** is a space on the Web where you can share work and ideas, pictures and links, videos and media. These are resources that can be edited collaboratively by a community of users
- **Instant messaging (IM)** is a form of communication over the internet that offers quick transmission of text-based messages from sender to receiver. Instant messaging basically offers [real-time direct written language](#)-based [online chat](#).
- A **virtual world** is an [online community](#) that takes the form of a [computer-based simulated environment](#) through which users can interact with one another and use and create objects. The term has become largely synonymous with interactive 3D virtual environments, where the users take the form of [avatars](#) visible to others. These avatars usually appear as textual, two-dimensional, or [three-dimensional](#) representations, although other forms are possible (auditory and touch sensations for example). In general, virtual worlds allow for multiple users.
- **Twitter** is an online social networking service and micro-blogging service that enables its users to send and read text-based messages of up to 140 characters known as "**tweets**".
- **Facebook** is a social utility that connects people with friends and others who work, study and live around them. People use *Facebook* to keep up with friends.
- **MySpace** is a social networking service owned by Specific Media LLC and pop music singer and actor Justin Timberlake

Cyberbullying

This new form of bullying has increased in recent years and may involve some or all of the following:

- Abusive messages or slugging
- Offensive comments
- Spreading rumours
- Posting offensive images

How to avoid it

- Pick your friends online carefully
- Limit the amount of personal information you put online
- Keep your passwords and pin numbers to yourself
- Don't send a message to someone if you are angry. A post can develop into a bullying situation if others add cruel comments to it. You are responsible for your words and actions in cyberspace as in the real world.
- Be polite to others online

How to deal with it

- Don't reply or get into online arguments
- Go offline
- Tell an adult – a parent, class tutor, deputy principal or principal
- Keep and save any bullying emails or images you have been sent.
- Take a screenshot of any comments that are threatening.

- Make a note of the time and date that messages or images were sent, along with any details you have about the sender.
- Inform your phone company or internet service provider as they can block calls, texts or messages
- Change your contact details and distribute them only to your closest friends
- If you know the username of the bully you can block them from your profile
- If you are getting nasty IMs (instant messages) change your online status to hidden
(This advice is from the Reach Out.Com website)

Follow the links below for resources to assist in educating students on the responsible use of the Internet and Social Media.

- <http://www.makeitsecure.org/en/young-users.html>
- <http://www.make-it-safe.net/>
- <http://www.webwise.ie/>
- <http://www.facebook.com/safety/groups/teens/>
- <http://www.internetsafety.ie/website/ois/oisweb.nsf/page/safety-en>
- www.watchyourspace.ie
- www.thinkb4uclick.ie
- www.safekids.com

Procedures for Alerting Facebook of Bullying or of inappropriate images.

The link below can be used to report the above to Facebook who generally take such reports seriously and quickly remove the offensive material.

<http://www.facebook.com/help/?page=178608028874393&ref=bc>

Procedure for Reporting a Fake Profile on Facebook.

The first piece of action to be taken by a person, in respect of whom a fake profile on Facebook has been set up, is to contact the Facebook Help Centre immediately and require Facebook to remove the fake profile. This can be done using the link to the Help Centre below. Facebook state that the profile will be removed within 24 hours from notification.

<http://www.facebook.com/help/?faq=167722253287296>

Procedure for having inappropriate or offensive clips removed from YouTube

YouTube may be alerted to inappropriate uses by selecting the 'Flag' option beside the clip. YouTube will then ask you to select one of six reasons why the video is inappropriate: Sexual Content; Violent or Repulsive Content; Hateful or Abusive Content; Harmful Dangerous Acts; Infringement of Personal Rights; Spam. Once you have indicated the reason YouTube will review the clip within 48 hours and delete it if necessary

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, inappropriate 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.