



# PARENT SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

## Rationale

Social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter are now widely used. This type of media allows people to communicate in ways that were not previously possible. However, such sites can be used inappropriately by some as a means of expressing negative or offensive views about schools or people associated with schools.

This document sets out Sacred Heart Parish Primary School's approach to parental use of such sites and sets out the procedures we will follow and action we may take when we consider that parents have used such facilities inappropriately. This policy should be read in conjunction with the Sacred Heart School Official Facebook Page Policy which covers acceptable behaviour on the official school Facebook page.

When we have referred to "parent" in this document, we also include carers; relatives; or anyone associated with the School. When we have referred to "staff" in this document, we include both paid employees and volunteers.

## Aims

- To encourage social networking sites to be used in a beneficial and positive way by parents
- To set parameters & expectations for parent-administered social networking sites linked to the Sacred Heart School community e.g. year level Facebook pages
- To safeguard students, staff and anyone associated with the School from the negative effects of social networking sites
- To safeguard the reputation of the School from unwarranted abuse on social networking sites
- To clarify what the School considers to be appropriate and inappropriate use of social networking sites by parents
- Set out the procedures the School will follow where it considers parents have inappropriately or unlawfully used social networking sites to the detriment of the School, its staff or its pupils, and anyone else associated with the School
- Set out the action the School will consider taking if parents make inappropriate use of social networking sites.

## Implementation

### Appropriate Use of Social Networking Sites by Parents

Social networking sites have potential to enable parents to access information about the School and build relationships between the school and parents. They also enable parents to connect with other parents in the school community. In addition, the School recognises that many parents and other family members will have personal social networking accounts, which they might use to discuss/share views about school issues with friends and acquaintances.

As a guide, individuals should consider the following prior to posting any information on social networking sites about the School, its staff, its pupils, or anyone else associated with the School:

- Is the social networking site the appropriate channel to raise concerns, give this feedback or express these views?
- Would private and confidential discussions with the School be more appropriate? Social media/internet sites should not be used to name individuals and make abusive comments about those people. It may be more appropriate and constructive to raise concerns directly with the school. Please refer to the Complaints Policy and Implementation Guidelines available from the school or via the Parent's Lounge.
- Are such comments likely to cause emotional or reputational harm to individuals, particularly if the School has not yet had the opportunity to investigate a complaint?
- The reputational impact that the posting of such material may have to the School; any detrimental harm that the School may suffer as a result of the posting; and the impact that such a posting may have on pupils' learning.

The school has an official Facebook page. Any other Facebook pages established by parents/others are independently managed and administered by parents, carers or others. Pages established by parents as a means of building connections with other families in the school community are required to post the following statement:

*This page is administered by a community of Sacred Heart Primary School Newport. It has been developed to foster collaboration, support and communications. Any comments or opinions expressed are those of the individual contributor and are not representative of the official views of Sacred Heart Primary School Newport. All administrators & contributors are required to abide by the Parent Social Media Policy of Sacred Heart Primary School Newport. The school takes no responsibility for content/posts/images contained or expressed on the page.*

#### Inappropriate Use of Social Networking Sites by Parents

Although social networking sites may appear to be the quickest and easiest way to express frustrations or concerns about the School (and those associated with it), it is rarely appropriate to do so. Other channels, such as a private and confidential discussion with the School, or using the School's formal complaints process are much better suited to this.

The School considers the following examples to be inappropriate uses of social networking sites. (This list is non-exhaustive and intended to provide examples only):

- Making allegations about staff or pupils at the School/cyber-bullying;
- Making complaints about the School/staff at the School;
- Making defamatory statements about the School or staff at the School;
- Posting negative/offensive comments about specific pupils/staff at the School;
- Posting photos of other parents children without consent;
- Posting racist comments;
- Posting comments which threaten violence.

Parents should also ensure that their children are not using social networking/internet sites in an inappropriate manner. It is expected that parents/carers explain to their children what is acceptable to post online. Parents/carers are also expected to monitor their children's online activity, including in relation to their use of social media.

## Procedure the School Will Follow If Inappropriate Use Continues

The School will always try to deal with concerns raised by parents in a professional and appropriate manner and understands that parents may not always realise when they have used social networking sites inappropriately.

Therefore, as a first step, the School will usually discuss the matter with the parent to try and resolve the matter and to ask that the relevant information be removed from the social networking site in question. **In serious cases or cases of defamation, your child/s enrolment will be ceased.**

If the parent refuses to do this and continues to use social networking sites in a manner the School considers inappropriate, the School will consider taking the following action:

- Take legal advice and/or legal action where the information posted is defamatory in any way or if the circumstances warrant this;
- Set out the School's concerns to you in writing, giving you a warning and requesting that the material in question is removed;
- Contact the Police where the School feels it appropriate – for example, if it considers a crime (such as harassment) has been committed; or in cases where the posting has a racial element, is considered to be grossly obscene or is threatening violence;
- If the inappropriate comments have been made on a school website or online forum, the School may take action to block or restrict that individual's access to that website or forum;
- Contact the host/provider of the Social Networking site to complain about the content of the site and ask for removal of the information;
- Take other legal action against the individual.

## Other Relevant Policies/Guidelines

- Parent Code of Conduct
- Sacred Heart School Official Facebook Page Policy
- Complaints Policy and Implementation Guidelines
- [Victoria State Government "Bully Stoppers" Social Media & Your School](#)

Updated: October 2020

To be reviewed as part of the school's cyclical review process