

SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY RESPONSES



To obtain a sense of how schools can address the use of social media in their policies, this fact sheet will examine sample policy responses. Below, we provide an outline of the content that may be included in a school's policies on social media in order to establish procedures and practices for the integration of these communication technologies into teaching and learning. These guidelines are provided as general guidance only; when considering their implementation, your school's specific circumstances should be taken into account.

Social Media Acceptable Use Policy

1. Whole-school agreement

Effective policies clearly articulate the shared responsibility among all members of the school community to promote positive uses of technology, particularly social media, and actively work together to address negative online behaviours. A whole-school agreement may state the following:

School X is committed to providing staff and students with the best possible information and communication technologies so they can access a wide range of educational resources and learning tools. The school aims to monitor staff and students' acceptable usage of social media and therefore uphold the school values when these tools are being used.

2. Policy rationale

A clear statement of purpose regarding the use of social media should be articulated in the policy. A policy rationale should emphasise the school's positive goals, but it must also clarify the consequences of misuse:

The Social Media Acceptable Use policy at School X outlines appropriate use of social media for the enrichment of students and the school community. School X will not tolerate social media by students or staff, and therefore explains below potential sanctions and disciplinary actions in response to any breach of policy.

3. Policy objectives

The objectives of the expected behaviour policy when using social media should outline the outcomes the school wishes to achieve by implementing this policy. To allow for ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of the policy implementation, it will be important to consider how these outcomes may be measured. For example, one objective may state something like the following:

The use of social media provides an opportunity to

- *create applications such as websites and blogs as part of the teaching program*
- *interact with peers and the wider school community*
- *study social media in subjects such as English and media studies*

4. Key understandings and competencies

It is important all members of the school community share common understandings about digital citizenship and pro-social behaviours on social media. This includes the type of behaviour expected when using social media as well as the type of behaviour that is not acceptable, particularly cyberbullying. The content should be consistent with the school's behaviour management policy, bullying prevention policy and any other policy referring to the school's behaviour expectations.

Common understandings that may be incorporated into a policy on social media include the following:

4.1 Definition of social media

4.2 Types of behaviour expected when using social media

4.3 Types of behaviour that are unacceptable when using social media

4.4 Actions to be taken by anyone experiencing a negative situation on social media

4.5 Actions to be taken by bystanders who witness a negative situation on social media

5. Rights and responsibilities

Individual and shared rights and responsibilities of students, families and school staff are best understood when outlined in the school policy. For example, an acknowledgement can be made that it is the responsibility of the whole-school community to encourage positive online behaviours when using social media and discourage cyberbullying in these online spaces.

5.1 Rights

A statement of the rights of students, staff, families and the wider school community with respect to social media, including

- *a declaration of the rights of individuals in the whole-school community to be free of all forms of bullying, including cyberbullying*
- *a statement of the privacy rights of students, staff, families and the school community*

5.2 Shared responsibilities

Policies should contain a statement of the shared responsibility of staff, students and families to model positive online behaviours and address poor behaviours.

Students, staff and families have a shared responsibility to

- *promote positive online relationships that respect individual differences in the school community*
- *acknowledge their responsibility as role models of positive and respectful online behaviours*
- *be familiar with the school's Social Media Acceptable Use policy and procedures*
- *report incidents of cyberbullying or cyber-aggression on social media in accordance with the school's policy on positive online behaviours and digital citizenship*
- *follow up with incidents of cyberbullying in accordance with the school's policy on bullying*

5.3 Students' responsibilities

Examples of students' responsibilities when using social media sites may include the following statements:

- *Do not post personal information (such as name, birth date, address, telephone number, current location or school) about yourself or another member of the school community.*
- *Do not post inappropriate or unauthorised photos or videos of yourself or another member of the school community.*
- *Do not post personal communications in someone else's name (for example, by setting up a Facebook account in the name of a staff member or another student).*
- *Respect the privacy of the school employees. Don't add school staff members as friends or contacts on social media sites such as Facebook.*
- *Do not upload pictures of others to social media without their permission.*

6. Reporting social media misuse

Schools have a responsibility to inform staff, students and families about the actions that should be taken in response to the misuse of social media. Below are some suggestions of what could be included.

6.1 Process for complaints

Members of the school community may report misuses of social media including cyberbullying by following the procedures for reporting outlined in the school's bullying prevention policy. These procedures must clarify how complaints will be investigated, handled and documented. They may follow these steps:

1. *Download an incident report form from the school website. Complete the form to be given to relevant staff for follow up.*
2. *Misuse will be documented and investigated to determine the severity of the behaviour.*
3. *Disciplinary action (following the school's behaviour management policy) will take place if the complaint clearly breaches school policies.*
4. *Police action may be required based on the level of severity of the behaviour. For example, online actions such as making threats or transmitting child pornography break the law and may lead to police involvement.*

6.2 Contact points for staff, students and parents

A school policy should identify contact points for reporting. Individual schools need to take into account their specific circumstances when assigning contact points in their policies, but an example is provided below:

The following points of contact at School X are recommended to deal with any report of the misuse of the schools' social media site:

- *Use our incident report form, which can be mailed, emailed or hand-delivered to the school reception. The form will be passed on to relevant staff for further investigations and parents contacted if necessary.*
- *Contact our online monitoring team, which serves to moderate the online content and behaviours of the school community on school-hosted websites. Names and numbers for the online monitoring team are provided at the end of this policy.*

- *Approach the school principal. Depending on the severity of the situation, this may be the last point of contact, or outside authorities may also need to be involved.*

6.3 Monitoring of the school's blogs and other websites

Schools which host blogs and other websites should clearly outline in their policy procedures for the monitoring and editing of the online content. Individual schools need to take into account their specific circumstances when stipulating rules concerning monitoring, but the following is an example of procedures specific to the monitoring of the school's social media site:

School X monitors and edits all online content under the Social Media Acceptable Use policy. To ensure the school's online webpages are able to be used safely and all content is acceptable, the page is routinely monitored for deleterious content.

If the you become aware of any defamatory material on the school website or blog, the following guidelines may be useful:

1. *Copy or write down the content and if possible, take a screen shot of the content to show who is involved. Note: School staff must ensure they adhere to school policy guidelines on child protection regarding pornographic material.*
2. *Exercise editorial control and delete the content that may impose a risk.*
3. *Once it has received your report, the school monitoring system will follow up the incident in line with our Behaviour Management policy.*

7. Policy sanctions

The school's policy should refer directly to the misuse of technology and prescribe specific responses. Policies prescribing these responses should be consistent with the school's acceptable use of ICT agreement and behaviour management policy. For example, the following sanction may apply in relation to use of school-hosted social media sites:

Students are encouraged to take responsibility when using School X's Facebook page, including familiarising themselves with the online behaviour regarded as being in breach of the Social Media Acceptable Use policy.

School X will tailor sanctions and disciplinary action in relation to students who meet specific concerns related to breach of the Social Media Acceptable Use policy, and will assist students to develop the self-discipline and other skills necessary to behave appropriately when using the online services.

The consequences of misusing online services will be clearly outlined so that all users are aware that these behaviours may lead to the withdrawal of access to online services.

8. Code of conduct for staying safe online

The following guidelines are an example of content related to staying safe online, which may be included in a school's social media policy. They can be consistently implemented through the school community's teaching and learning program. While the content here again refers specifically to School X's Facebook page, schools must consider their own specific circumstances and adapt the guidelines to meet their needs.

School X outlines a number of methods to stay safe online while using social media. Our School's Facebook page (or other social media site) allows our community to keep up to date with activities through the use of an easily accessible online environment.

8.1 Using real names

All users interacting with the School X's Facebook page, whether liking or commenting on posts, must do so using a Facebook account that clearly identifies them by their real name.

8.2 Using names in posts

The names of others can be used in posts only when you wish to acknowledge someone's positive work or community contribution. The Facebook page is intended to build the school's community spirit and thus provides a supportive online environment to users.

8.3 Interacting with the Facebook page

Users will be able to 'like' and comment on the school's posts and on comments by other users. However, users will not be allowed to author a post of their own or load media such as photos or videos. These rights can and will be reviewed over time, which may lead to further access for particular users.

8.4 Raising issues

School X encourages the school community to share positive news or upcoming events using the school's Facebook page. However, School X also reminds the community that some situations are best dealt with privately. The issues raised in this environment should be limited to school improvements, generally those related to infrastructure or processes. Issues involving personal relationships with students or staff must not be raised on Facebook. School X will not support negative posts, and we do not permit the names of our staff, students or any other community members to be included in issue-based posts.

8.5 Moderation and blocking

School X reserves the right and responsibility to set the strength level of the Facebook profanity filter and to add additional words and names to the page's block list.

8.6 Underage Facebook users

Following Facebook's terms and conditions, School X does not endorse the creation of a Facebook account by children under 13 years of age.

8.7 The law and Facebook's Statement of Rights and Responsibilities

School X's Facebook page operates under the Commonwealth Telecommunications Act and Facebook's Statement of Rights and Responsibilities.

9. Contacts

In this section, list relevant contact information, such as that of the school's online monitoring team.

10. Helpful links

Include any links that expand on the content of the policy. A list of useful links can be found on the Friendly Schools website.