



Policy: **SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**

Approved at School Council Meeting: May 2017      Review: May 2018

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**Rationale:**

Social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are widely used by members of our community. While these sites are a convenient way for individuals to express themselves and communicate online, they may also be used inappropriately as a means of conveying negative or offensive views about schools and their staff.

The purpose of this document is to inform our broader school community of Shepparton East's approach to parental use of social media sites and sets out the guidelines, procedures and actions we will follow if we consider an individual to have used such tools inappropriately. When we have referred to "parent" in this document, we also include carers; relatives; or anyone associated with the School.

**Aims:**

- To encourage social networking sites to be used in a positive and proactive way by parents, students and staff
- To safeguard student, 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 online
- Clarify what the School considers to be suitable and unsuitable use of social networking sites by parents, students and staff
- 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 utilise social networking sites inappropriately when expressing views about the school or it's students, staff or community members.

## **Implementation:**

### *Appropriate use of social networking sites by parents, students and staff:*

Social networking sites have the potential to enhance the learning and achievement of pupils and enable parents to easily access information about the School. 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? e.g. if there are serious allegations being made/concerns being raised, please contact the school to discuss any concerns you may have.
- Are such comments likely to cause emotional or reputational harm to individuals which would not be justified, particularly if the School has not yet had a chance to investigate a complaint?
- The impact the material may have on the reputation of the School and the effect such a post may have on pupils' learning.

### *Inappropriate use of social networking sites by parents, students and staff:*

Although social networking sites may be a quick and easy way to express frustrations or concerns about the School (and those associated with it), it is not appropriate to do so. A private and confidential discussion with the School, or using the School's formal complaints process will allow opinions and concerns to be heard fairly and applicable action to be taken.

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;
- Making complaints about the School, staff or students at the School;
- Making defamatory statements about the School or staff at the School;
- Alluding to incidences or individuals connected to the school in a negative manner;

- 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 and that they satisfy the age recommendations for such sites. 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 deal with concerns raised by parents in a professional and appropriate manner and understand that parents may not always realise when they have used social networking sites inappropriately. Therefore, as a first step, the School will endeavour to 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. 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 the parent in writing, giving them 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.

Evaluation:

This policy will be reviewed annually.