Social Media Policy

This social media policy promotes our staff’s responsible use of social media. It is provided to support staff as they engage in digital media conversations and interactions for official, professional and personal use.

Staff within the school have a great deal of experience across a range of education and public policy areas. These voices should be encouraged to engage in the conversations that are taking place every day in public forums made more accessible through online social media.

Social media is a group of online applications such as social networking sites, wikis, blogs, microblogs, video and audio sharing sites, and message boards that allow people to easily publish, share and discuss content. Conversations in social media are a dialogue, an opportunity to listen, share, collaborate and respond to our colleagues and communities. We recognise the importance of participating in these conversations. Because the social media space is relatively new, and comments may be public and potentially permanent, we’ve developed this policy to support staff as they engage in any conversations or interactions using digital media for official, professional and personal use.

The policy promotes responsible use and can be summarised as:
- Know and follow relevant school policies including the VIT Code of Conduct
- Be honest
- Be polite and considerate
- Use common sense
- Be apolitical and impartial when using social media for official and professional use
- Demonstrate Catholic values that underpin our work in Catholic schools

This policy also provides direction for establishing official school social media networks, blogs, microblogs, message boards or image and video sharing sites. For a more detailed understanding of social media please refer to the Using Social Media online guide on the Department of Education’s website. You will also find a set of useful Interactive Learning Modules that help assist staff with professional judgement around the area of social media.

The St James Primary School Social Media Rules of Engagement
1. Know and follow relevant school policies including the VIT Code of Conduct.
2. Be aware when you mix your work and personal lives – the general public consider us ‘the voice’ of the school 24/7. Represent St James PS well.
3. Be transparent and identify yourself when discussing department-related topics or issues - use your real name, tell people you work for us and be clear that you are giving your personal opinion.
4. Consider what you say before you say it – it’ll be on the web for a long time!
5. Be original and respect copyright.
6. Use discretion. Take care not to publish information that should not be made public. If you aren’t 100% sure, seek advice.
7. Play fair; be polite, be considerate – don’t pick fights or engage in them, remember what you say will be public for a long time.
8. Stick to your area of expertise and talk about what you know.
9. It’s a conversation so be human - use your own voice and bring your personality into the conversation. It makes it more interesting!
10. Admit your mistakes – we all make them so when you do, be quick to admit and correct them.
11. Make sure your personal online activities don’t interfere with your job performance.
12. If it’s official department communication, be dedicated, be constant – get permission, listen, plan, contribute regularly and keep listening.

1. Know and follow relevant school policies including the VIT Code of Conduct and Australian Professional Standards for Teachers
   ■ What you produce can ultimately have consequences for you.
   ■ Failure to abide by this policy and the Code of Conduct could put you at risk.
   ■ Please also follow the terms and conditions for any third-party sites.

2. Be aware when you mix your work and personal lives
   ■ The lines between your personal and professional lives are blurred in online social networks; as are what might be considered ‘public’ versus ‘private’ boundaries.
   ■ Your role with the school creates an association between what you say online and the school itself.
   ■ Represent the school well and be sure that the content you publish is consistent with your work and our professional standards.

3. Be transparent and identify yourself when discussing school-related topics or issues
   ■ If you are publishing content related to your work, identify that you are a school employee.
   ■ If your comments are not made on an official school social media account, be clear it’s your personal opinion.
   ■ As an identified school employee, your comments should be apolitical, impartial and professional.

4. Consider what you say, before you say it
   ■ If you’re uncertain about something, don’t publish!
   ■ It will be around for a long time so make sure it’s correct before you post and seek advice if in doubt.
   ■ Remember whatever you publish on your personal account is yours and can have consequences for you personally.
   ■ Don’t forget to check your spelling and grammar – your professional credibility is inextricably linked to your online comments.

5. Be original and respect copyright
   ■ It is critical that you show the proper respect for copyright laws and fair use of copyrighted materials owned by others, including user-generated content.
   ■ Acknowledge your source – it’s also good practice to link to other people’s work.

6. Use discretion
   ■ In your efforts to be transparent, you need to take care not to publish information that should not be made public.
If you are not responsible for the information, ask permission to publish content that isn’t already in the public domain.
- Avoid discussion of industrial or legal issues, and refer these to the relevant directorates if asked to comment specifically.
- Content published on the internet is widely accessible and is public for a long time.
- If you are in doubt about whether information can be made public, seek advice.

7. Play fair: be polite, be considerate
- Don’t be afraid to be yourself but do so respectfully.
- Adopt a polite and considerate tone and avoid crossing the line from healthy debate into attack.
- Be sure to make it clear that your views and opinions do not necessarily represent the official views of the school.

8. Produce content about your area of expertise
- Whenever possible make sure you produce content about your areas of expertise, as they relate to the activities of the school.
- If you are responding to a question that falls outside your area of expertise, state that it isn’t your area of expertise and that you’ll follow up.
- Seek advice from the appropriate area within the school to develop a response.

9. It’s a conversation, so be human
- Share your thoughts and opinions in a personable way.
- Listen to what people are saying, avoid ‘lecturing’, and produce content that’s open-ended and invites response.
- Actively encourage people to submit comments.
- Be plain-speaking, informal but respectful, empathetic, friendly, positive, concise and honest.

10. Admit your mistakes
- We all make mistakes. So when you make a mistake, be quick to admit and correct it.
- If you are correcting a mistake do so, but indicate the change you’ve made.
- If it is more serious and could lead to legal action, contact legal services for advice.

11. Make sure that your personal online activities don’t interfere with your job performance.
- Be mindful of personal time spent on social media at work.
- Used well, social media provides excellent opportunities for professional networking, ideas exchange and professional feedback.

12. If it’s official school communication, be dedicated, be constant.
- If you decide it’s appropriate to use social media for official school communication, you need to get permission from leadership first, then ensure appropriate approvals.
- Make sure it is part of an overall communication plan, listen to what people are saying and have someone champion the account to keep the conversation going.
- An untended conversation can send the wrong message, so if you don’t have the resources to maintain it, don’t do it.

Official St James’ social media accounts
- Official school social media accounts need to be approved by the school principal or by people delegated by the principal, such as the deputy principal.
■ Adhere to the school’s social media policy and guidelines.

What is an official account?
Official accounts represent the school, and are approved as above.

Inappropriate online behaviour & material may constitute a criminal offence and could become a police matter. For example, online content may substantiate the offence of ‘using a carriage service to menace, harass or cause offence’ (Criminal Code Act 1995 (Cth) s. 474.17).

If you come across inappropriate posts or content, Staff Members must consider the following:
1. Take a screen shot or print a copy of the concerning online content.
2. If you consider the content to be explicit, pornographic or exploitative of minors, Staff Members should keep a record of the URL of the page containing the content, but NOT print or share it. The URL can be provided to the School Principal, or police, as required.
3. Report the content to the Social Media Provider.