

## **ST. PATRICK'S SNS SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**

### **Introduction to the Policy**

The community at St. Patrick's SNS is aware and acknowledges that increasing numbers of adults and children are using social networking sites. The widespread availability and use of social networking applications and media bring opportunities to understand, engage and communicate with audiences in new ways. It is important that we are able to use these technologies and services effectively and flexibly, for educational purposes. However, it is also important to ensure that we balance this with our reputation and the safety of our pupils and staff. This policy and associated guidance was drafted in consultation with the staff to protect staff and pupils and to advise school leadership on how to deal with potential inappropriate use of social networking sites. For example, our use of social networking applications has implications for our duty to safeguard the children in our care each day. The policy requirements in this document aim to create a balanced approach to support innovation in learning whilst providing a framework of good practice.

### **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, Twitter and Instagram 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

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Encourage social networking sites to be used in a responsible, beneficial and positive way by staff and parents
- Safeguard pupils, staff and anyone associated with the school from the negative effects of social networking sites; Safeguard the reputation of the school from unwarranted abuse on social networking sites; to protect the integrity and good name of all members of the school community from online abuse
- Clarify what the school considers to be appropriate and inappropriate use of social networking sites by parents;

Most social media sites are targeted at older teenagers and adults and to reflect this, have age restrictive registration policies. However, in reality, it is still possible for children under the age of thirteen to register using false information. Being mindful of this, as parents, guardians and educators, we need to be vigilant of the children's use of social media and educate them about the importance of safety online.

### **Scope**

This policy covers the use of social networking applications by all pupils, parents and staff in our school. The requirements of this policy apply to all uses of social media which are used

for any school related purpose and regardless of whether the persons involved are contributing in an official capacity to social media applications provided by external organisations. Social media applications include, **but are not limited** to:

- Blogs, e.g. Blogger Twitter
- Photo and Media sharing services, e.g. Instagram, YouTube, TikTok
- Online discussion forums, e.g. netmums.com
- Collaborative spaces e.g. Facebook

### **Social Networking as part of School Service**

All proposals for using social networking applications as part of a school service (whether they are hosted by the school or by a third party) must first be approved by the Principal. We acknowledge that there are many sites which can be of great use to the children's educational and social development and sites such as *Seesaw*, *Class Dojo*, *Mangahigh* etc are currently in use in our school. Staff are expected to exercise sound judgement and maintain the highest professional standards while using Social Media in the school.

### **Terms of Use**

School representatives must adhere to the following Terms of Use. This includes, but is not limited to, public facing applications such as open discussion forums and internally-facing uses such as project blogs regardless of whether they are hosted on school network or not. Where applications allow the posting of messages online, users must be mindful that the right to freedom of expression attaches only to lawful conduct. We at St. Patrick's SNS expect that users of social networking applications will always exercise the right of freedom of expression with due consideration for the rights of others and strictly in accordance with these Terms of Use:

### **Social Media / Networking applications**

- Must not be used to publish any content which may result in actions for defamation, discrimination, breaches of copyright, data protection or other claim for damages that may bring the school into disrepute.
- Must not be used for the promotion of personal financial interests, commercial ventures or personal campaigns
- Must not be used in an abusive or hateful manner
- Must not breach the school's bullying policy.
- Must not be used to discuss or advise anything relating to school matters, staff, pupils or parents
- References should not be made to any staff member, pupil, parent or school activity / event unless prior permission has been obtained and agreed with the Principal

### **Guidance/protection for Pupils on using social networking**

- No pupil may access social networking sites during the school working day
- Pupils use of phones in school are not allowed unless permission is granted by the Principal for a specific reason. Otherwise phones will be confiscated if they are visible in class and will be handed into the Principal's office where it will remain until the pupil in question's parent/guardian comes in to collect it
- No pupil should attempt to join a staff member's areas on networking sites. If pupils attempt to do this, the member of staff is to inform the Principal. Parents will be informed if this happens
- No school computers are to be used to access social networking sites at any time of day.

- Any improper contact or cyber bullying of any kind should be reported to the class teacher / principal as soon as it happens
- We have a zero tolerance to cyber bullying
- No pupil may upload content to Tiktok, Youtube, Vimeo, Snapchat or alternative sites, of themselves and /or other pupils/staff while on the school grounds, on school trips, and/or in school uniform

### **Cyber Bullying**

- By adopting this policy on the use of social media sites on school premises, St. Patrick's SNS protects themselves from accusations of complicity in any cyber bullying through the provision of access.
- Parents/guardians should be clearly aware of the school's policy of access to social networking sites.
- The school through the use of the HSCL service will organise courses and information sessions for parents/guardians on safe internet use.
- Where a disclosure of bullying is made, schools have the duty to investigate and protect, even where the bullying originates outside the school\*.
- Once a disclosure is made, investigation will have to involve all parties involved and their families. This should be dealt with in accordance with our school's anti-bullying policy.
- If parent(s) / guardian(s) refuse to engage and bullying continues, it can be referred to the Gardaí as harassment
- *\*While incidents occurring outside of school is not our responsibility as such, we will endeavour to assist in brokering a solution between parties involved. This guidance can also apply to text and mobile phone cyber bullying*

### **Success Criteria**

Ensure a safe environment for all our children.

Increase awareness among the children and staff about appropriate use of social media and respect each others privacy.

### **Review**

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis.

### **Implementation**

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on \_\_\_\_\_ and circulated to all staff and parents/guardians. It will be implemented from \_\_\_\_\_2020

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_