

SOUTHCITY CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

GENERAL



SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY: PUPILS, STAFF AND PARENTS

Background:

Modern day pupils, parents and staff find themselves in a technological world where they access, create, collaborate and contribute to the many social networking platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, YouTube, Whatsapp, TikTok, blogs, wikis and several other social media platforms.

It has, therefore, become essential that staff, parents and pupils become extremely vigilant and mindful of the dangers and responsibilities associated with this social media explosion! With the right monitoring and understanding of these dangers and responsibilities as well as insight into the pitfalls, parents and schools can go a long way to making a difference.

Because Social Media is here to stay, SCS takes the view that when exercised responsibly, in moderation and with supervision, it can be a valuable tool educationally, and a fun and enjoyable one too.

While Southcity Schools respects the individual privacy of staff and pupils, this privacy does not extend to their work- and school-related conduct or to the use of equipment and resources provided by SCS.

According to the provision of Communication-related Information Act 70 of 2022, the school may intercept any communication that is conveyed through the Schools' information systems or social media platforms, including any information regarding the schools, as SCS does not want its name or reputation or that of its staff or pupils to be brought into disrepute.

It must be emphasised that information on social media by staff, pupils or their parents is a reflection of Southcity Christian Schools and is subject to the Schools':

- Code of Conduct for staff, parents and pupils
- Disciplinary policy and procedures
- Social Media Policy for Pupils, Staff and Parents

Purpose:

The purpose of this Social Media Policy is to:

- govern the appropriate use of social media platforms by all sectors of the Schools and is applicable to staff (teachers and administrators), parents and pupils, thus ensuring a safer working practice.
- to encourage and extend the use of these media in constructive and educative ways, thus educating all stakeholders on limiting and containing the possibilities of destructive or counter-productive usage.
- highlight the importance for all staff, parents and pupils to understand the advantages and potential risks of social media, so they can avoid or mitigate the inherent risks.
- set clear rules of behaviour relevant to social networking.

It must be noted that the Schools will only intervene in out-of-school activities if it's in the best interest of a member of staff or pupil or if the pupil/staff member/parent brings the name of SCS into disrepute.

The digital environment is fluid and is constantly evolving and this Social Media Policy will, therefore, need to be updated to accommodate any changes regularly. This will be communicated to all parties.

POLICY:

Guidelines for Pupils and Parents (where applicable):

Be responsible for whatever you write or post online. Social Media platforms are very public. What you contribute leaves a digital footprint for all to see – even if it is deleted, it can be retrieved. So, don't post anything you wouldn't want friends, enemies, parents, teachers or even a future employer, university or another school to see!

Pupils should:

- Complete the compulsory Digital Citizenship programme during Life Orientation/Lifeskills as identified by SCS.
- Always be respectful online. Make sure all communication is constructive and not hurtful.
- Remember that the use of social media is an extension of the classroom and what is acceptable in a classroom is acceptable online, and what is not acceptable in class is then not acceptable online.
- Protect themselves by applying the maximum privacy settings on all social media platforms they use.
- Remember that social media is not private and that the information can be shared with others through their friends or contacts.
- Not access any social media that is for adults only. Adhere to the minimum age requirements, i.e. Whatsapp – 16 years old, Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook – 13 years old.
- Not engage in cyber-bullying (see below), insulting, racial or sexual language, derogatory, hurtful or offensive comments and/or visual media, or any practice which is against the schools' values and practices or Code of Conduct.

- **Distinction between Mean Behaviour, Rude Behaviour and Bullying behaviour online:**

Mean Behaviour: is once off and could have been directed at anyone. Bad day behaviour.

Rude Behaviour: is once off but is directed at someone on purpose.

Bullying Behaviour: is repeated, intentional and focused on someone, specifically over a period of time.

- Not post any confidential information about themselves, the school, teachers, pupils or any other member of the community on any social media platform.
- Not take or send (post) photos, pictures or videos of staff, pupils or any other person without their permission. This includes photoshopping of any pictures, photos or videos of another person.
- Not post inappropriate material (pornography) as it will lead to disciplinary action.
- Not upload any offensive or demeaning material, distribute or link to such material that can be associated with SCS, i.e. school logo, branding and name.
- Realise it is a serious offence to use another person's account or create an account in another person's name without their consent.
- Not allow themselves to be active/added on groups where the contacts are not known to them.
- Not share their passwords with anyone.
- Do their own work! They may not use other people's intellectual property without permission. They may not post work on any site and pretend it is their own.

Lawful Prosecuting Ages:

Less than 7 years old - Civil Capacity

Less than 12 years old - No capacity to commit a crime – cannot be prosecuted

12 to 14 years old. Presumed not to have capacity – but prosecution may show that the t(w)een does have criminal capacity

Older than 14 years - has full capacity

Age restrictions for use of some well-known apps:

Snapchat: at least 13 years old

TikTok: rated for 12+ years old

Instagram: at least 13 years old

Facebook: at least 13 years old

WhatsApp: 16 or older

It is essential that parents check age restrictions and apply the protections on the Apps/Gaming and other sites loaded on their children's cell phones.

What to do if someone posts something (or pictures or videos) of you that you feel are offensive or makes you feel uncomfortable:

- Report the abuse by telling a parent, Grade Head or another adult
- Capture and save all the relevant information, e.g. screenshots, any posts and sender information – do not delete the evidence
- Ask someone to help you find the offender (a parent or trusted adult)
- Depending on the seriousness of the offensive material, the matter may be referred to the Police or a social media lawyer.

Guidelines for Teachers:

Be responsible for whatever you write or post online. Social Media platforms are very public. What you contribute leaves a digital footprint for all to see – even if it is deleted, it can be retrieved. So, don't post anything you wouldn't want friends, enemies, parents, teachers or even a future employer, university or another school to see!

The contents of postings must be kept accurate, respectful, ethical and legal.

Teachers should:

- At all times represent themselves in a professional manner online and be mindful of the reputational risks when posting information online.
- Be above reproach with online behaviour as disciplinary action may be taken against staff who engage inappropriately on social media.
- Be aware that what they post online is an extension of themselves.
- Not abuse any confidential/privileged information they have access to through the nature of their profession in any way on social media.
- Teachers may not befriend any of their pupils current or past on Facebook (or any other social media platform), unless the site is specifically set up for professional purposes. Do not initiate online friendships with pupils.
- “Friends” have the ability to download and share your information/posts/pictures/videos with others.
- Report to the Head any inappropriate or offensive pupil behaviour they become aware of.
- Be aware of your profile's security and privacy settings. Failure to do so could open your content to a large group of unknown people. Your privacy and that of your family may be at risk.
- Weigh whether a particular posting puts your effectiveness as a teacher at risk.
- Be careful not to fall for phishing scams that arrive via email or on your Facebook wall, providing a link for you to click, which leads to a fake login page.
- If any member of staff is aware of any inappropriate communications involving any pupil on any social media platform, these must immediately be reported to the Designated Grade Head of the relevant grade/s.

- If a staff member learns of information, on a social networking site, that falls under the mandatory reporting guidelines (physical injury, sexual abuse, deliberate neglect, harassment, grooming), they must report it as required by law. (Bring to the attention of the Head)
- No member of staff may post offensive, threatening, abusive, harmful, hateful, malicious, discriminatory, demeaning, derogatory or which amounts to unlawful harassment or discrimination.
- No member of staff may post illicit photos, profanity, obscene or pornographic photos or other derogatory content.
- A staff member may not post information or make comments detrimental to which may negatively impact SCS or any of its employees or stakeholders.

In addition:

Only persons who are authorised by the Head of the School may engage in social media communication or comment on any aspect of SCS on any matter on behalf of the School.

An authorised person who engages in social media communication on behalf of SCS must ensure that he/she is familiar with the Schools' views on specific issues, and should not express views that are inconsistent with those set up by SCS.

Any person who does not have authority to make statements on behalf of SCS, must clearly indicate that the statement is their own opinion and does not represent SCS or any other person at SCS.

Only the official and approved logo and branding may be used by persons authorised by the Heads of SCS.

All staff, parents and pupils are advised to read and familiarise themselves with this document as they will be required to sign acknowledgement and receipt of the contents annually.

I/WE HAVE READ ALL THE ABOVE INFORMATION PERTAINING TO THE SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY AND PARENT/S AND I/WE CONFIRM OUR UNDERSTANDING AND ACCEPT THE LEGAL CONSEQUENCES THEREOF. PLEASE SIGN BELOW.

PARENT 1 (FULL NAME & SURNAME)	PARENT 2 (FULL NAME AND SURNAME)
SIGNATURE:	SIGNATURE:

Pupil's name & grade : _____

Updated: November 2022