



Scoil Mhuire

Email: secretary@scoilmhuireshankill.ie Principal: Brian Coleman

Social Media Policy

Introduction to the Policy

The community at Scoil Mhuire 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 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 practise.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- To encourage safe and responsible use of social media, as appropriate, within the school.
- Ensure that the school is not exposed to legal risks.
- Ensure that the reputation of the school is not adversely affected.
- Ensure that our users are able to clearly distinguish where information provided via social media applications is legitimately representative of the school.

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 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 may include, but are not limited to:

- Blogs
- Online discussion forums
- Collaborative spaces e.g. Instagram
- Media sharing services, e.g. YouTube

All school representatives should bear in mind that information they share through social networking applications, even if they are on private spaces, are still subject to copyright, data protection and Freedom of Information legislation etc.

Use of Social Media during school-time

Use of social media in work time for personal use only is not permitted, unless permission has been given by the principal.

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 GoNoodle, and Class Dojo are currently in use in our school.

Use of social networking applications which are not related to any school services (for example, contributing to a wiki provided by a professional association) does not need to be approved by the principal. However, school representatives must still operate in line with the requirements set out within the policy.

Terms of Use

School representatives must adhere to the following Terms of Use.

The Terms of Use below apply to all uses of social media applications by all school representatives. 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 Scoil Mhuire 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. This includes but is not limited to material of an illegal, sexual or offensive nature 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 be used for actions that would put school representatives in breach of school codes of conduct or policies relating to staff.
- Must not breach misconduct, equal opportunities or bullying and harassment Policies.
- Must not be used to discuss or advise anything relating to school matters, staff, pupils or parents.
- No staff member should have a pupil or former pupil under the age of 18 as a 'friend' to share information with.
- Employees should not identify themselves as a representative of the school
- 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
- Staff should be aware that if their out-of-work activity causes potential embarrassment for the employer or detrimentally effects the employer's reputation then the employer is entitled to take disciplinary action. Violation of this policy will be considered as gross misconduct and can result in disciplinary action being taken against the employee.

Guidance/protection for staff on the use of social media

- No member of staff should interact with any pupil in the school on social networking sites

- No member of staff should interact with any ex-pupil in the school on social networking sites who is under the age of 18
- This means that no member of the school staff should request access to a pupil's area on the social networking site. Neither should they permit the pupil access to the staff members' area e.g. by accepting them as a friend.
- It is illegal for an adult to network, giving their age and status as a child

Guidance/protection for pupils on using social networking

- No pupil may access social networking sites during the school working day
- All mobile phones must be handed up to the class teacher at the beginning of the school day.
- 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 attempts to breach firewalls will result in a ban from using school ICT equipment other than with close supervision.
- 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 Youtube, Vimeo, Snapchat or alternative sites, of themselves and/or other pupils while on the school grounds, on school trips, and/or in school uniform.

Child protection guidance

If any member of staff receives a disclosure that an adult employed by the school is using a social networking site in an inappropriate manner as detailed above they should:

- Report the disclosure to the Designated Liason Person / Deputy Designated Liason Person.
- The disclosure should be recorded by the DLP / DDLP in line with the child protection policy, and Tusla should be contacted for guidance.
- Procedure as advised by Tusla will be followed, and the necessary authorities contacted.

Cyber Bullying

- By adopting this policy on the use of social media sites on school premises, Scoil Mhuire protects themselves from accusations of complicity in any cyber bullying through the provision of access.
- Parents should be clearly aware of the school's policy of access to social networking sites.
- 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 police 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 other's privacy.

Review

This policy will be reviewed on a bi-annual basis.

Signed: Br. Phil Ryan
Br. Phil Ryan, CFC, Chairperson.

Date: 1/2/2023

Signed: Brian Coleman
Brian Coleman, Principal.

Date: 1/2/2023