

Social Media Policy

Addendum to Acceptable Use Policy



Social Media Policy

Ratified by the Board of Management: 23rd October 2023

School Patron: The Right Rev. Dr. Paul Colton,

Bishop of Cork, Cloyne and Ross

School Address: Knocknabohilly, Kinsale, Co Cork, P17 AF10

Registered Charity Number: 20112844

Tel: 021 477 4106/086 037 0254

Email: stmultose@gmail.com

Roll number: 14726C

www.stmultosens.ie

Chairperson: Mr Daniel Emerson

Principal: Ms Jill Horan

This Social Media Policy forms part of the Acceptable Use Policy for St. Multose National School. It was devised in conjunction with the staff of the school and ratified by the Board of Management. This policy mirrors the Acceptable Usage Policy and Mobile Phone Policy and is implemented in an addendum to these and other relevant school policies.

Addendum - Social Media

Introduction

St Multose National School recognises and appreciates the important contribution of social media to enhance communication and interaction in the digital age in which we live. As a school community, we believe that this resource if harnessed constructively, can be used to change, and enhance the way we teach, learn, and interact with one another. We acknowledge social media has an influence on communication and interaction, allowing us to share information and opinions with a broad audience. We are committed to developing our pupils' technological and communication skills by encouraging responsible and safe use of the Internet. We believe this to be the shared responsibility of the parents, teachers, pupils, and the wider school community.

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1. Definition

Social media is an umbrella term used to describe websites or internet applications that allow people to interact with each other, by sharing information, opinions, knowledge, and interests. Websites and apps such as Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, WhatsApp, TikTok, Vimeo and Skype are a few examples of what media our children are using. Social media also include 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 is not exhaustive as technology is constantly developing new ways of communicating.

2. Rationale

The mission statement of St. Multose National School states that our school is a Church of Ireland Primary school in which we strive to learn together in a happy and safe environment, where everyone is valued, respected, and encouraged to do their best. St. Multose National School acknowledges the positive role the internet plays in the education of our pupils, however, as a school we wish to alert pupils to the scope for irresponsible and inappropriate use of social media sites which can lead to bullying, harassment, and access to inappropriate or illegal material while online or where victims can be subjected to inappropriate and unsolicited comments. The staff of St. Multose National School acknowledge that this negative commentary on social media is not confined to the classroom but can extend into the wider community often having damaging consequences for victims. We recognise that this virtual playground is often unsupervised and unregulated. The devising of this policy is a response to this new reality, calling all of us as a school community to come together and teach responsible internet use.

3. Scope

This policy covers the use of social networking by all pupils, parents/guardians, and school staff. Due to the diverse nature of access to social media, this policy relates to all such interactions both during and outside of normal school hours and includes the use of social media applications on school and personal devices. Social media applications include, but are not limited to:

- Twitter, Blogs
- Photo and media sharing services e.g. Instagram, YouTube, TikTok
- Online discussion forums e.g. Netmums

- Collaborative spaces e.g. Facebook
- Messenger apps e.g. WhatsApp, Snapchat, WeChat, Facebook messenger
- Games/apps- Roblox, Clash of Clans
- Video Conferencing apps like Zoom, Teams, Vimeo etc.

4. Aims of this policy are:

- to identify strategies for pupils that will enable them to use social media safely and responsibly
- to safeguard pupils, staff, and members of the school community 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 names of all members of the school community from online abuse
- to clarify what the school considers to be appropriate or inappropriate use of social networking sites
- to outline behaviours which are unacceptable and the consequences for engaging in these
- to outline procedures for school community members who find themselves the victims of inappropriate social media behaviour
- to establish the role of teachers and parents in encouraging safer internet use and reporting incidents.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

- The Board of Management will approve the policy and ensure its implementation, development, and evaluation.
- The Principal and Deputy Principal will be responsible for the dissemination of the policy; and the application of sanctions; and together with the Parents' Association will schedule workshops and guest speakers on this topic.
- Class teachers and parents will advise children on safe internet use. Teachers will teach the children from Third to Sixth class the internet safety lessons from Webwise.ie
- The staff and parents of St. Multose N.S. will outline unacceptable uses of social media to pupils.

- Teachers will report incidents of online bullying to the Principal and be mindful of the obligations under Child Protection Guidelines
- The school community will provide support for those who have been victims of online bullying

5. General Principles of Safe and Responsible Use of Social Media

- Under GDPR – **The digital age of consent is 16 years in Ireland** and is designed to protect the personal information of children. The digital age of consent is the minimum age a user must be before a social media and internet company can collect, process, and store their data. In May 2018, the EU adopted a new set of Data Protection Regulations. These requirements also state the processing of data of children under the age of 16, in respect of online services, shall not be lawful without parental consent.
- Giving permission to your child to set up a social media account while they are underage can engage your child in a world, they are unprepared for.
- Users of social media should be selective about what they share. Everything happens in front of a vast, invisible, and often anonymous audience. Once you post something, it doesn't disappear as it can be copied and forwarded easily and quickly. Everything leaves a digital footprint. Users should never post personal details such as your phone number, email address or home address.
- Users should be selective with friends. Be careful when making friends online. In general, it is better to restrict friends to people you know and trust. Talk to parents before adding new friends or people unknown to you. For parents, the key to keeping their child safe online is to ensure that the people they are interacting with online are also known to them in real life (friends and family).
- Users should never post their location. Facebook lets users post their location on every post. Children should not do this for safety and privacy reasons.
- Users should use strict privacy settings. Review all the options on the privacy settings page. Many sites default settings tend to keep information public until a user makes it private.
- If your profile is linked to your mobile phone, you should use the website's privacy settings to ensure your phone numbers are not visible.

6. Terms of Use

Members of the school community 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 blogs regardless of whether they are hosted on a school network or not. Where applications allow the posting of messages online, users must be mindful that the right of freedom of expression attaches only to lawful conduct. At St. Multose N.S. we expect that users of social networking applications will always exercise the right of freedom of expression with due consideration of the rights of others and strictly in accordance with these Terms of Use:

Communication between Pupils/Parents/School Staff

- Communication between pupils and staff, by whatever method, should take place within clear explicit professional boundaries. This includes the wider use of technology such as mobile phones, text messaging, emails, digital cameras, videos, webcams, websites, and blogs.
- Communication between all members of the school community (pupils, parents, staff) must be always respectful. Social media applications must not be used to communicate in an abusive or hateful manner and must not breach the school's Anti-bullying Policy.
- Teachers can be contacted via the school phone number. Staff should not give their personal mobile numbers, personal email addresses or contact details to pupils or parents.
- Staff should not request, nor respond to, any personal contact made by a pupil to them on a social media site and should inform school management immediately of the same.
- Members of the school community need to ensure that when they are communicating with others, even outside school, that they give due regard to the potential consequences of such comments. Making comments or allegations on social networking sites about others connected with the school could result in formal action being taken against them. This includes the uploading of photographs or messages, that may bring a person, persons, or the school into disrepute.

Guidelines for staff on the use of Social Media Sites

All proposals for using social networking applications as part of a school service (whether hosted by the school or by a third party) must be approved by the Principal. We acknowledge that there are many

platforms which can be of great use to children's educational and social development and sites such as Seesaw etc. are currently in use in our school. Staff are expected to exercise sound judgment and maintain the highest professional standards while using social media in the school.

Personal use of Social Media

The use of Social Media sites by staff is governed by the Code of Professional Conduct from the Teaching Council. Registered teachers should:

Communicate effectively with pupils, colleagues, parents, school management and others in a manner that is professional, collaborative, and supportive, and based on trust and respect.

- Ensure that any communication with pupils/ students, colleagues, parents, and school management is appropriate, including communication via electronic media, such as email, texting and social networking sites
- Ensure that they do not knowingly access, download or otherwise have in their possession while engaged in school activities, inappropriate or illegal materials/images in electronic or any other format
- Staff are encouraged to use the privacy settings on social media sites/apps and to keep updated on developments on privacy restrictions.

Unacceptable uses of Social Media sites and their consequences

Users are responsible for their own behaviour when communicating on social media and will be held accountable for the content of their communications that they post on social media locations.

7. Cyberbullying

Definition (refer to Anti-Bullying Policy) This type of bullying is increasingly common and is continuously evolving. It is bullying carried out using information and communication technologies such as text, social network sites, e-mail, instant messaging (IM), apps, gaming sites, chat rooms and other online technologies. Being the target of inappropriate or hurtful messages is the most common form of online bullying. As cyberbullying uses technology to perpetrate bullying behaviour and does not require face-to-face contact, cyberbullying can occur at any time, day, or night. Many forms of bullying can be facilitated through cyberbullying.

Bullying and cyberbullying are defined in The Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-primary schools 2013 p. 8 as: 2.1.1bullying is

defined as unwanted negative behaviour, verbal, psychological or physical conducted by an individual or group against another person (or persons) and which is repeated over time.

2.1.2 The following types of bullying behaviour are included in this non-exhaustive definition:

- (i) deliberate exclusion, malicious gossip and other forms of relational bullying;
- (ii) cyber-bullying; and
- (iii) identity-based bullying such as homophobic bullying, racist bullying, bullying based on a person's membership of the Traveller community and bullying of those with disabilities or special educational needs.

2.1.3 In addition, in the context of these procedures placing a once-off offensive or hurtful public message, image or statement on a social network site or other public forum where that message, image or statement can be viewed and/or repeated by other people will be regarded as bullying behaviour.

2.1.4 Isolated or once-off incidents of intentional negative behaviour including a once-off offensive or hurtful text message or other private messaging do not fall within this definition of bullying and should be dealt with, as appropriate, in accordance with the school's code of behaviour.

A single incident can have a serious effect on a pupil and may also constitute harassment which is legally prohibited in schools under equality legislation. Harassment is any form of unwanted conduct related to any of the nine discriminatory grounds (gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race, and membership of the Traveller community).

8. Unacceptable use of Social Media

- Pupils are not permitted to access social networking sites during the school day.
- Pupils are not allowed to have mobile phones in school, unless parents/guardians have written a letter to the Principal requesting permission for their child to have a mobile phone for an essential reason and outlining the reason, otherwise phones will be confiscated if they are visible in school. (see to Mobile Phone Policy).

- Sending or posting discriminatory, harassing, negative comments, threatening messages or images that may cause harm to any member of the school community.
- Forwarding, 'Liking' or commenting on material that is likely to cause offence or hurt to a third party.
- Posting photos of others without their consent or tagging members of the school community in photos without their consent
- Sending or posting messages or material that could damage the school's image or a person's reputation.
- Creating a fake profile that impersonates any other member of the school community.
- Sending or posting material that is confidential to the school.
- Participating in the viewing or exchanging of inappropriate images or obscene material. While all cases involving the inappropriate use of social media will be dealt with on an individual basis, the school and the Board of Management consider the above to be serious breaches of our Code of Behaviour. Disciplinary action will be taken in the case of inappropriate use of social media tools.

9. Sanctions for Policy Infringements

Infringements of this policy may have disciplinary repercussions, including (but not exclusively):

- Blocking/removal from school platform/X/Facebook etc.
- Suspension of digital privileges in school
- Confiscation of devices if found on school grounds or on school-related activities
- Notification to parents and/or sanction
- Suspension from school and/or school-related activities
- Exclusion
- Legal action and/or prosecution

10. School Use of Social Media as a Tool

The purpose of maintaining an online presence on X and Facebook is to keep the school community up to date with what is happening in the

school. The school X and Facebook pages allow the school to feed information, news and notices directly into the personal news feeds of parents and the wider school community to quickly share and celebrate children's achievements and school updates. It can also raise the profile of the school in the local community for existing families and potential new admissions.

Responsibility for the administration of the School X and Facebook pages lies with the Board of Management. This duty falls under the Assistant Principal II post. It is the responsibility of the individual administrator appointed by the Board of Management as part of the duties of the APII post as well as every member of the wider school community to ensure that any Social Media Policy content they post on the school X or Facebook pages is in line with the guidelines laid out in this policy and other relevant school policies.

Posts and Comments

- The page administrator(s) will communicate in a positive, accurate, respectful, and responsible manner. They will always uphold and promote the values and ethos of the school.
- School staff and the school PA may contribute to the school's X and Facebook activities by providing content for the page to one of the designated page administrators.
- All parents, guardians and members of the wider school community are also welcome to like, share and comment on postings. We would request that they do so in a similarly positive, respectful, and constructive manner.
- Both the school X and Facebook pages/accounts are public. Therefore, only information intended for public knowledge should be posted.
- If followers have any specific concerns, particularly related to their own or other child/children, we ask that they do not post these on the page timeline and encourage them to speak directly to the class teacher.
- Under no circumstances should any child/children be named or described on the page. This is due to data protection and the legal responsibility we must keep the children safe.
- Users should not advertise products or services on the school X or Facebook pages.

Photographs and videos

- Parents are asked to fill in a permission form for the school to use photographs of their child and/or their child's work on school publicity materials including the school's X and Facebook page.
- Photographs of children or their work will not be posted on the pages unless parents have provided permission via the Aladdin platform.
- Only authorised administrators have permission to upload photographs and videos onto the pages. This is because they are aware of the parental permissions held by the school.
- No one else is permitted to post any photographs or videos on to the page. The setting allowing people to post or tag photos (on Facebook), will be turned off.
- No children will be tagged or named in relation to a photo directly on the pages. However, there may be links to the school website or to third-party articles (e.g. in local newspapers) where children may be photographed and named.
- Where consent has been provided, photographs of children will be taken and posted using a school device.

X and Facebook Site Moderation

- The pages will be moderated daily by the page administrator(s) appointed by the Board of Management.
- Page administrators can be contacted by sending a private message to either the school X or Facebook accounts or through the school office.
- All visitors to the pages are asked to inform the school of any inappropriate comments, behaviour, or concerns they have relating to the page.
- The Facebook page profanity filter will be set to 'strong'.
- All comments and messages on X and Facebook will be monitored.
- The page administrator(s) will endeavour to respond to all requests or messages on X and Facebook. However, the school office remains the primary point of contact for all general queries/feedback.

Misuse

- If an inappropriate or offensive comment is made by a member of the school community it will be recorded by a page administrator (screenshot), deleted, and brought to the attention of the Board of Management. The Board of Management will contact the individual(s) involved to explain why their comment/behaviour is inappropriate or offensive and inform them that it has been removed.
- If a child is described or named (whether in the main post or within comments), it will be recorded by an administrator (screenshot), immediately deleted, and brought to the urgent attention of the Board of Management.
- If an inappropriate or offensive comment is made by someone who is unconnected to the school, the Board of Management will respond accordingly. The response will depend on the content of the post but may include contacting the user via private message, deleting the comment, banning the user, or reporting the post to relevant external bodies.
- If any individual repeatedly makes inappropriate comments (two times or more), the Board of Management has the discretion to ban the offending individual from the school X or Facebook account and (where appropriate) report the offender to relevant external bodies.

Restrictions

- The X and Facebook pages are designed as communication tools to engage with parents and guardians. It is therefore restricted to people over 18 years of age.
- The Board of Management has the discretion to remove or ban any followers that are known to be under 18 years old.
- Both X and Facebook list a minimum age requirement of 13 and all parents are reminded that children under the age of 13 should not have a X or Facebook account. Where parents choose to show relevant content on the school page to their children through their own accounts, we would ask them to be vigilant and to ensure that their children are not accessing X or Facebook unattended.

11. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be monitored by the staff of St. Multose National School in conjunction with the Principal and the Board of Management. Reviews will be undertaken as deemed necessary.

Ratified by the Board of Management in St. Multose National School on 23rd October 2023.

Signed:

Date:

Chairperson of the Board of Management