



Policy Name	School Social Media & Networking Policy & Procedures
Related Policies and Legislation	Computer Usage Policy Privacy Policy
Policy Category	Planning & Management
Relevant Audience	Treetops Staff Board of Governance
Date of Issue / Last Revision	16 June 2016 27 October 2016
Date Set for Review	October 2019
Person/s Responsible for Review	Treetops Administration

School Social Media & Networking Policy & Procedures

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to inform and guide the way Treetops staff, students and parents use and interact with social media.

This policy has been developed to protect the School's students, staff, assets and reputation through clear protocols for use of social media in official and personal capacities. In addition, the policy is in place to set standards for social media use which are consistent with the broader values, mission, aims and expectations of the School's community.

The policy covers two key aspects of social media use:

- a. The official use of social media tools by the School to communicate and interact with the School and wider community in regard to news and events at the School; and
- b. The use of social media by staff, students and parents in a personal capacity in relation to School matters.

Statement of Context

Treetops Montessori School is committed to the effective dissemination of information and communication within the organisation and with students, parents, alumni, stakeholders, and the media. All communication should support the overall values and aims of Treetops.

Treetops is a contemporary-thinking organisation that actively uses social media. As a relatively new communications medium, this can offer many benefits to the School, clients, employees and other stakeholders. However, without clear guidelines there is also the risk of misleading other participants, and harm being caused to the School's reputation.

The School recognises that employees, students, and their parents may use social media channels outside school hours both in a professional or private capacity; however, such use can still have a negative impact upon the School. Treetops wishes to ensure its community takes great care to avoid this by acting in the School's best interests when on-line at all times either on school or private equipment.

What are Social Media Channels?

There are various forms of social media channels and there are always new forms of social media being developed. Currently, the main forms of social media include, but are not limited to:

- Social networking sites: Facebook, MySpace, Google+, Foursquare, LinkedIn, Bebo & Friendster;
- Video and photo sharing websites: Content Communities such as Flickr, Instagram, Wessabe and YouTube;
- Micro-blogging sites: Twitter, Posterous, Dailybooth;
- Instant Messaging: Skype, SMS, Facebook;
- Geotagging: Foursquare;
- Blogs: including corporate blogs and personal blogs or blogs hosted by traditional media publications;
- Podcasts: including corporate podcasts and personal podcasts;
- Forums and discussion boards: e.g. local discussion boards, Whirlpool, Yahoo! Groups or Google Groups;
- Virtual game worlds: e.g. World of Warcraft;
- Virtual Social Worlds: e.g. Second Life;
- Online encyclopaedias: e.g. Wikis such as Wikipedia, Geo-wiki, GeoNames and Sidewiki; and
- Any other websites that allow individual users or companies to use simple publishing tools, (together called Social Media).

These channels offer individuals the opportunity to connect with people, create and share information and ideas and develop relationships through online communities and networks.

Relevant Legislation

The laws that apply in the 'real world' also apply in cyberspace. Although there are a several benefits that social media can bring to both personal usage and School purposes, there are certain risks and implications. While there is no one specific piece of legislation that regulates social media sites and the use of social media, it is important to keep in mind that what staff and employers do with social media, can have real world legal consequences.

Recent decisions by Fair Work Australia have again confirmed that proof of excessive use or the inappropriate use of social media during, or outside of work hours, may constitute a valid reason for termination of employment. Examples of Acts that may be associated with the use of social media:

- *Fair Work Act 2009*;
- *Privacy Act 1988*;
- *Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Act 1979*;

- *Telecommunications Act 1997* (Note: the *Cybercrime Legislation Amendment Bill 2011* - still being debated in the Senate);
- *Criminal Code Amendment (Cyber Predators) Act 2006*;
- *Copyright Act, 1968*;
- *Copyright Amendment (Digital Agenda) Act 2000*;
- *Copyright Amendment (Moral Rights) Act 2000*;
- *School Education Act 1999*;
- *School Education Regulations 2000*.

Staff are advised that social media conversations may also be covered within School policies pertaining to privacy, defamation and intellectual property. Staff need to be aware of the concept of leaving a “digital footprint”, i.e. communication via social media and email is virtually indelible.

Principles

OFFICIAL SCHOOL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Only employees authorised by the Principal may create social media identities, profiles or accounts that use the School’s name or logo or are designed to represent the School in any way. Only authorised employees may officially represent Treetops, and only in authorised social media platforms, as outlined in this policy.

Treetops has approved the School Administration to use Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube as the School’s social media platforms. No other platforms are to be used unless otherwise authorised by the Principal.

Employees authorised to use the School’s official social media platforms must:

- Maintain the same high standards of conduct and behaviour online as would be expected in a physical work environment.
- Behave impartially and professionally.
- Behave with respect and courtesy, and without harassment.
- Deal appropriately with information, recognising that some information needs to remain confidential.
- Be sensitive to the diversity of colleagues, peers, students and the community.
- Take reasonable steps to avoid conflicts of interest or perceptions thereof.
- Uphold the values of Treetops Montessori and International Baccalaureate (IB) School.
- Protect the integrity and reputation of Treetops Montessori and IB School, its students, parents and staff.
- Comply with applicable laws and legislation, including copyright, intellectual property, privacy, financial disclosure, defamation and other such applicable laws.
- Protect the privacy and security of Treetops Montessori and IB School, its employees, students, parents, partners and suppliers.
- Assist and support the achievement of the School’s strategic objectives.
- Not knowingly provide incorrect, defamatory or misleading information about the School’s own work, the work of other organisations, or individuals.
- Represent the organisation as a whole and should seek to maintain a professional and uniform tone. Staff and volunteers may, from time to time, and with appropriate approval, communicate on behalf of Treetops Montessori and IB School, but the impression should remain one of a singular organisation rather than a group of individuals.

Staff and students posting comments on official School communications should observe the standards of conduct and behaviour above. Treetops reserves the right to delete official posts or comments that are deemed to be defamatory or offensive.

Content communicated via social media should be consistent with the values, mission, aims and expectations of the School community, as well as the School’s official key marketing messages.

Authorised employees in the School Administration using social media in an official capacity are given autonomy to represent Treetops' views in an ongoing conversation with the public, parents and students. However, there are occasions when content must be reviewed by Senior Management. This includes, but is not limited to, content that is:

- Politically sensitive.
- Associated with a project or activity deemed to be high risk.
- A response to an individual or group that is deemed to be high risk, or
- Directly quoting another staff member (e.g. a response attributed to the Principal).

Information published via social media is a public record and a corporate record for recordkeeping purposes.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF STAFF, STUDENTS AND PARENTS

Staff, students and parents using social media in a personal capacity must take due care to ensure that any comments, opinions, photographs or contributions made online are their own, as private citizens, and cannot be interpreted as an official statement or position of Treetops.

Staff, students and parents are expected to maintain the same high standards of conduct and behaviour online as would be expected in a physical/work environment.

The reputation of Treetops Montessori and IB School is to be safeguarded by all those connected to the School (employees, contractors, parents and students).

Criminal behaviour online will be reported to the Police.

School Administration

School Administration are to:

- Develop and implement educational programs for students and where appropriate, parents to cultivate ethical digital citizenship.
- Investigate any reports of online bullying or inappropriate postings and to implement sanctions commensurate with the scale of the incident.
- Ensure that filtering systems are maintained that help ensure websites and emails viewed on School computers are appropriate for children.
- Report all breaches of this Policy to the Principal (or delegate).
- Ensure this policy is understood by staff for whom they have a supervisory responsibility.
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of this policy on an annual basis.

Staff

- Blogs or similar, may be used for educational purposes, but must have the approval of the Principal and consistently apply the same high standards of the School.
- Employees are required to declare their purpose and their position as a representative of the School when using an official staff account.
- Employees must not use social media channels, Skype or similar programs to communicate with current students unless for education or teaching purposes and the employee has the permission of the Principal.
- A personal relationship with current students via social media channels (for example, adding a current student as a 'friend' or 'follower' on Facebook, MySpace or Twitter or accepting an offer to join theirs) may exceed the accepted bounds of a teacher/student relationship and may leave the employee open to allegations of improper conduct. Therefore, employees may not invite students into their personal social networking site or accept an invitation to theirs and may not use social networking sites to email or contact students unless for education or teaching purposes and the employee has the permission of the Principal.

- Employees must be aware of “Conditions of Use” for social media sites to be used for teaching purposes and that these conditions could preclude account use by students below certain ages (13 years is frequently stated).
- Employees are advised to use professional discretion before accepting ex-students or parents of current students as ‘friends’ or ‘followers’ on social media channels.
- Employees must not post images that include other employees, volunteers or students on social media channels, unless approved by the School for Educational purposes.
- Employees must not use the School's logo or create School branded accounts which could be interpreted as representing the School;
- Consistent with privacy laws and other School policies, employees must not, under any circumstances, reveal through social media channels confidential, proprietary or privileged information related to the School or its students, staff members, finance, policies or procedures, which is not otherwise publicly available.
- Employees should take note of and comply with any copyright/Creative Commons notices attached to content they wish to use/repurpose. Additionally, employees must cite or otherwise acknowledge content sources when they are known.
- Employees must be apolitical, impartial and professional and avoid any statements that might be interpreted as advocating government policies or criticising the policies of political parties or groups.
- Employees must not either during or after hours, under any circumstances, disparage or speak adversely about the School or other schools, School business matters or activities, its employees or its students through social media channels.
- Employees are reminded that they should not have any expectation of privacy when it comes to content and information stored or posted in the social media environment. Even if employees intend to keep the information private, it may unintentionally enter the public domain. For example, online content may inadvertently be viewed or accessed by colleagues, the media, students or families of students.
- Employees may not store or post inappropriate content and information in the social media environment, which is capable of being connected with the School, may adversely affect the School’s reputation, a student’s reputation and the individual employee’s reputation.
- Employees may not identify or discuss co-workers or post photographs that include co-workers unless you have obtained their permission first.
- Employees need to clearly understand that the School has the right to and may monitor staff use of the internet, email and social media at any time.
- Breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action being taken against the employee. Disciplinary action may include limitation or removal of access to School Systems or termination of employment or a contractor’s engagement with the School.
- Employees need to read, understand and comply with this policy in addition to the School’s Internet and Email Usage Policies. The above requirements apply regardless of whether you have restricted the access to your personal site to selected persons only.
- Online activities should not interfere with the job performance of any employee.
- Staff should consider the impact of any social media content on their own career or that of their colleagues (e.g.: “liking” a questionable page).
- School email addresses are not to be shown on social media sites.
- Confidential information about any member of the School community must not be disclosed.
- Staff should be mindful of improper associations that could damage the reputation of the School.
- Caution must be used when installing external applications that work with social networking sites e.g. calendar programs and games.

Students

Students are/should:

- responsible for using online media in accordance with criminal law, copyright law, the IT Acceptable Use Policy and Students' Code of Conduct;
- guided not to share their personal information with those who have not earned their trust or have met face to face;
- to respect the dignity and privacy of other members of the School community and are not to use social media for:
 - posting, viewing or distributing pornography, including sexting;
 - online harassment or bullying;
 - outing;
 - exclusion;
 - slander/defamation;
 - cyber stalking; or
 - masquerading.
- to report any incident involving the points listed above. Incidents can be reported to Deputy Principal or the Principal;
- consider the impact of any social media content on their own career or that of their friends;
- not to falsify their age in order to sign up for social media sites used for educational purposes that have age limits;
- not to record personal details on public sites used for educational purposes;
- not to share their School user name or passwords with anyone;
- to comply with copyright regulations. Students are advised to read the copyright agreements of online providers; and
- not post material that would cause disrepute or embarrassment for staff of Treetops Montessori and IB School, other students or their families.

Parents

Parents are:

- responsible for using online communications with other members of the Treetops Montessori and IB School community lawfully and respectfully;
- responsible for monitoring the online activities of their children when they are not at school;
- responsible to report to a member of the Senior Management Team any incidents of inappropriate online activity (listed above). Incidents can be reported to the School Office or Principal. Depending on the nature of the evidence supplied with the report and the seriousness of the incident, appropriate resources will be allocated to investigations;
- required to be familiar with this policy and ensure that their children understand and comply with this policy; and
- required to not post material that would cause disrepute or embarrassment for staff of Treetops Montessori and IB School, students or their families. Parents should understand that publishing defamatory comments about Treetops Montessori and IB School staff is illegal.

The School's Facebook Page

The Treetops Montessori and IB School Facebook page has been set up to share news and events with our extended community. We invite you to communicate with members of the Treetops Montessori and IB School community and other fans to share your thoughts and experiences of the School.

Breach of Policy

Unacceptable use of social media may be a breach of enrolment, employment or contractual obligations, misconduct, sexual harassment, discrimination or some other contravention of law.

Non-compliance with this policy by an employee may be grounds for disciplinary action, which could lead to termination of employment, depending on the severity of the breach. Such instances will be investigated in line with fair process.

Non-compliance with this policy by a student may be grounds for disciplinary action or expulsion, depending on the severity of the breach. Such instances will be investigated in line with fair process.

Parents who breach this policy may also in appropriate cases be asked to withdraw their child from the School.

Any breach of this policy by staff will be considered by the Principal or Deputy, and will be dealt with on a case by case basis.

Treetops Montessori and IB School employees, students and parents who use social media in their own time using their own resources should note that their private comments posted publicly could potentially have repercussions at work. Such instances will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis with consideration to the possible damage to the reputation of the School, its staff or its students.

For any criminal breach of this policy, the Police will be called to investigate.