



Catholic Schools Office  
Diocese of Broken Bay

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# POLICY ON THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR THE DIOCESAN SCHOOLS SYSTEM

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OPERATIONAL POLICY

November 2014

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance about the use of social media in the educational, administrative and personal contexts for staff members employed in the Diocesan Schools System (DSS) for the Diocese of Broken Bay. This guidance includes staff members' use of social media in the school context with students and parents and the maintenance of professional standards in a staff member's own use of social media. This policy has been constructed to assist in protecting students and staff members of the DSS.

## POLICY FRAMEWORK

### Catholic Context

Recent church documents provide a starting point for how staff members should engage with social media and utilise it in an educational setting. They address specifically the opportunities and challenges of using social media in the Church context.

In its 2009 Social Networking Protocol of the Catholic Church in Australia<sup>1</sup> the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference stated:

*The overarching principle ..... should be that of human dignity, and at each step in the social networking endeavour, care should be taken by church personnel to ensure that the innate dignity of each person is upheld.*

*Clear distinctions should be maintained between personal and professional communication in the social networking environment.*

*The use of photographs or videos should be carefully monitored, and permissions should be sought from all who appear in photographs or videos before being posted or tagged.*

*[Social networking should be used] to build appropriate relationships that can encourage and foster growth in faith. This engagement should facilitate a growing in relationship with Christ.*

In anticipation of World Communications Day in June 2014<sup>2</sup>, Pope Francis stated:

*The revolution taking place in communications media and in information technologies represents a great and thrilling challenge; may we respond to that challenge with fresh energy and imagination as we seek to share with others the beauty of God.*

The Melbourne Declaration on the Educational Goals for Young Australians<sup>3</sup> (MCEETYA, 2008) recognises the new challenges associated with the digital age:

*Rapid and continuing advances in information and communication technologies (ICT) are changing the ways that people share, use, develop and process information and technology in this digital age, young people need to be highly skilled in the use of ICT.*

The Australian Curriculum requires that students develop ICT capability as they learn to use ICT effectively and appropriately to access, create and communicate information and

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<sup>1</sup> <http://mediablog.catholic.org.au/?p=335>

<sup>2</sup> [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/communications/documents/papa-francesco\\_20140124\\_messaggio-comunicazioni-sociali.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/communications/documents/papa-francesco_20140124_messaggio-comunicazioni-sociali.html)

<sup>3</sup>

[http://www.curriculum.edu.au/verve/\\_resources/National\\_Declaration\\_on\\_the\\_Educational\\_Goals\\_for\\_Young\\_Australians.pdf](http://www.curriculum.edu.au/verve/_resources/National_Declaration_on_the_Educational_Goals_for_Young_Australians.pdf)

ideas, solve problems and work collaboratively in all learning areas at school, and in their lives beyond school. The capability involves students in learning to make the most of the technologies available to them, adapting to new ways of doing things as technologies evolve and limiting the risks to themselves and others in a digital environment.<sup>4</sup>

### **Definition of Social Media**

Social media is defined as any form of online publication or presence that allows interactive communication, including, but not limited to, social networks, blogs, internet websites, internet forums, and wikis. Examples of social media include, but are not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Google+, Flickr.<sup>2</sup> and Tumblr.

Online learning communities include both communities created by teachers and/or students for internal use within a school and communities created by a third party and accessed by DSS teachers and students. An example is Edmodo.

This policy does not stand alone. It must be read and interpreted alongside other relevant DSS policies. This policy is aligned to the DSS Pastoral Care Policy<sup>5</sup> and has been constructed to assist in sustaining safe and supportive school environments that uphold human dignity.

### **Principles**

This policy is underpinned by the following principles:

- Online behaviour should at all times demonstrate a Christ – centred respect for the dignity of each person.
- Staff members are expected to conduct their activities in a manner that supports and advances the mission of Catholic schooling the Diocese – the education and formation of students in Catholic discipleship.
- Social media is a powerful tool for learning when used in an informed and considered manner.
- State and Federal legislation and the child protection protocols and policy of the DSS must always be observed.
- Staff members and student online interaction must have a clear purpose and occur only in an educational context.
- Staff members and students must behave in an ethical manner when interacting and using online community sites and resources.
- Staff members' personal social networking online must be congruent with the professional standards expected of staff members in a Catholic school.
- Professional Learning programmes are provided in schools for staff members on the appropriate use of social media and for parents through the Diocesan Parent Council and/or school based initiatives.
- Educational programmes are provided for students to ensure the appropriate use of social network and community learning sites on the Internet.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/GeneralCapabilities/Information-and-Communication-Technology-capability/Introduction/Introduction>.

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.csodbb.catholic.edu.au/\\_uploads/rsfil/002274\\_ceac.pdf](http://www.csodbb.catholic.edu.au/_uploads/rsfil/002274_ceac.pdf)

## **POLICY CONTENT**

### **Staff Use of Social Media in Learning Contexts**

Staff members are encouraged where appropriate to use online learning communities with their students in order to achieve educational outcomes.

When using online community sites with students, consideration must always be given to the age and developmental level of the students.

Staff members must ensure that they prepare students to act in accordance with the guiding principles before using online community sites for learning.

The use of online community sites that support an educational or administrative function must be authorised by the principal or his/her delegate.

Parental/carer permission must be obtained for students to register with online learning communities.

Students must not be asked to falsify their age or identity to register on any site.

Staff members must respect students' rights to privacy in academic work, records and results when posting online.

Any learning activity must not be linked back to a student's own personal social network page.

### **Staff Members Using Social Media and Online learning Communities with Students**

Staff members must discuss any use of online community sites with the principal or his/her delegate outlining the activity and its educational goals before establishing a social media site for use with students.

Students need clear instruction about their responsibility for appropriate interaction with others and suitable content posting online. Students who do not follow the conditions of the school may be denied any further on-line access.

Students should be taught about the appropriate use of social media within the context of cyber-safety education and responsible digital citizenry.

The posting online of school, student or staff member photographs needs to be carefully considered in the context of privacy requirements and the Diocesan Schools System Privacy Policy<sup>6</sup>.

Another teacher or member of the school leadership team must also have full administrator access to the site.

Any social media site created by a staff member needs to be monitored by that staff member frequently and actively. In the event of inappropriate material being posted on the site the staff member needs to capture the inappropriate material for the purpose of clarifying with the student or students what it is about, store that captured content and then delete the on-line content found to be inappropriate.

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<sup>6</sup> [http://www.csodbb.catholic.edu.au/\\_uploads/rsfil/004516\\_dbaa.pdf](http://www.csodbb.catholic.edu.au/_uploads/rsfil/004516_dbaa.pdf)

### **Staff Personal Use of Social Media**

Staff members should not accept students as 'friends' on their own social network sites or interact with students on social networking sites.

Staff members must not discuss students or co-workers or publicly criticise school policies or personnel on social networking sites.

Staff members must not post images that include students on social networking sites.

Staff members must not conduct themselves or communicate in a manner inconsistent with the Catholic ethos or values of the Diocesan Schools System or that in any way brings themselves or the Diocesan Schools System into disrepute.

Staff members must ensure any posting to social media or blogging sites is consistent with the standards expected of professionals in Catholic education.

### **Maintaining Professional Standards**

It is acknowledged that there may be occasions when staff and former students communicate through their personal social media accounts eg in youth ministry. Staff members should be aware however that communicating with former students through personal social media accounts may be perceived to be compromising their professionalism even though a professional relationship no longer exists. Contact with former students leaves a staff member open to allegations that the staff member used his or her position to develop and maintain a personal relationship with the student before the student left the school. This may require an investigation in accordance with child protection policy and/or action under the policy for performance and disciplinary matters.

Staff members should ensure that they use social media both in a personal or a professional context to represent the Catholic workplace well, and not to use social media to bring themselves or their employer into disrepute.

Employees need to understand that their digital communication may never be regarded as private or confidential when it relates to students and their parents.

### **Professional learning**

It is the responsibility of each school to provide professional learning for staff members in implementation of this policy. Education Officers - eLearning can advise and/or support school leaders in developing programmes.

In meeting the obligations of the DSS Social Media Policy each diocesan school will need to ensure that:

1. Staff have access to an electronic and/or hard copy of the current policy; and
2. Staff have an opportunity to receive clarification around aspects of the policy that they may not fully understand.

Whilst aspects of the Social Media Policy for staff may be treated within the context of staff induction, the induction of new staff to the diocese and the early career teacher induction programmes, it is important that school records such as the meeting agendas and staff meeting minutes reflect activity related to the Policy. This will assist in determining Policy compliance within the context of school review and/or related enquiry.

## RELATED LEGISLATION, POLICIES, GUIDELINES AND SUPPORT MATERIAL

### Legislation

- Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth)
- Copyright Act 1968 (Cth)
- Copyright Amendment (Digital Agenda) Act 2000 (Cth)
- Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (NSW)
- Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (NSW)
- Defamation Act 2005 (NSW)
- Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)
- The Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth) Policies
- Acceptable Use Policy for Internet/Intranet and Network Services
- Anti-Bullying Policy for Diocesan Systemic Schools, Diocese of Broken Bay
- Anti-Harassment policy for Diocesan Systemic Schools, Diocese of Broken Bay
- Child Protection Policy for Diocesan Systemic Schools: Addressing Allegations of Inappropriate Behaviour by Staff
- Pastoral Care Policy for Diocesan Systemic Schools, Diocese of Broken Bay
- Pastoral Care and Wellbeing Framework for Learning for the Diocese of Broken Bay

### Schools System

- Policy for Addressing Employee Performance and Disciplinary Matters
- Privacy Policy for Diocesan Systemic Schools, Diocese of Broken Bay

### Supporting documents

- Professional Guidelines for Staff in their Relationships with Students
- DSS Cyber-safety Guidelines for Schools
- Principles of employment
- Australian Catholic Bishops Pastoral Letter on Internet Safety  
<http://www.youtube.com/ACBCcomms>
- Social Networking Protocol for the Catholic Church in Australia Australian Catholic Bishops Conference December 2009 <http://www.catholic.org.au>
- Staff Use of Social Media in Sydney Catholic Schools – CEO Sydney 2012
- Social Networks: portals of truth and faith; new spaces for evangelisation – (Pontifical Council for Social Communications 2013)

## POLICY REVIEW

This Policy will be reviewed annually to take account of new technology, new or changed legislation and changes to schools' practices to ensure it remains appropriate to the changing school eLearning environment.

## POLICY DATES

Date of completion of development and adoption:	August 2013
Date of current version	November 2014
Date of next review:	November 2015

authorised by  
**Peter Hamill**  
 Director of Schools