

Social Media Policy

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1. Purpose

- The purpose of this Policy is to establish clear standards and guidelines in relation to the use of social media where such use potentially impacts adversely upon the operations, interests or reputation of Christian Schools Tasmania and its schools.

2. Scope

- It is not the intent of this Policy to prohibit the use of social media by members of the school community, but rather to establish clear standards and guidelines in relation to the use of social media where such use potentially impacts adversely upon the operations, interests or reputation of the school or upon individual members of the school community or upon relationships with or between members of the school community.
- This Policy relates to the use of social media during school hours and/or on school premises, and also outside school hours and/or away from school premises where such activity may impact adversely upon the school or members of the school community as per Section 2.1 above.
- While this Policy is applicable most obviously to staff and students, the principles also apply to parents and other members of our school communities where social media activity impacts directly upon the school or members of the school community.
- This Policy is aligned with the Australian Human Rights Commission National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.

3. Policy

- Definition of terms for the purpose of this Policy:**
 - Social Media** for the purposes of this policy refers to a broad range of social and community networking websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking (in both private and public spaces) such as blogs, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, MySpace and Wikispaces, and document managing, editing and storage sites (e.g. Google Docs, Box, Dropbox, Evernote).
 - Inappropriate Use of Social Media** includes, but is not limited to, the use of social media in ways that threaten, abuse, bully, harass, frighten, incite violence or hatred, belittle, unfairly criticise, offend, embarrass, defame, exclude, insult, damage reputations, impersonate, misrepresent, convey sexual innuendo or proposition, communicate false pretences, encourage unlawful acts, violate privacy and confidentiality, or otherwise disrespect the rights of others or the School.
- General:** it is expected that all usage of social media shall be in ways that are responsible, ethical, respectful, legal and honouring to God, and not for selfish or sinful ends. Inappropriate use of social media is not acceptable, and a breach of this policy may also involve a breach of one or more other school or CST policies.

In cases of inappropriate use of social media occurring outside school hours and/or away from school premises, the School shall take reasonable action within the limits of its capacity to do so.

The Senior Leadership at each school shall ensure that the School is proactive in communicating its policy in relation to the use of social media to members of the school community. Such communication should also make reference to other related policies.

Each school shall take steps to limit access to social media during the course of the school day, other than in instances of sites approved for use as part of the educational program.

Any social media sites or pages bearing the name of any schools, or intended to be official school sites or pages, shall be approved by the CEO or nominated delegate prior to creation and should represent the School accurately and positively.

- **Staff:** all staff are expected to comply with CST's Staff Code of Conduct & SCYP policies. Teaching staff are also expected to comply with the Code of Professional Ethics, being a statement of the ethical commitments, practices and aspirations that underpin the identity of the teaching profession in Tasmania and that reflect the ongoing articulation of that identity by the profession.

Staff hold a unique position of trust and influence, and are always in a professional relationship with students, whether at school or not. It is therefore imperative that they are able to demonstrate that all contact with students is in line with the Code of Professional Ethics and that a valid context exists for any communication.

Staff should carefully consider potential adverse implications for the School, themselves and others before posting content on social media sites. Social media should not be used:

- to disclose confidential information about the school;
- in a way that may disparage or otherwise adversely impact the school or members of the school community;
- in a way that is contrary to the school's standards of behaviour and ethos;
- to post inappropriate material that could damage their own reputation;

Staff are expected to exercise wisdom when making personal points of view on social media. It may be appropriate for staff to indicate when a view is personal and when it is the School's official opinion regarding a particular matter.

Staff shall not allow the use of social media during working hours to have an adverse impact on the performance of their duties.

Staff shall take all reasonable precautions to limit what social media content is accessible and by whom. Such precautions should include establishing different 'friend lists' and customising privacy settings.

Staff shall exercise particular care and professional discretion when choosing with whom they interact socially with online. This applies in relation to currently enrolled students, as well as to past students and parents of students.

In general, staff should not have currently enrolled students as online social media 'friends'. While it is appreciated that many staff members will have connections and contact with currently enrolled students for a wide range of reasons beyond the school context, this does not negate the professional responsibility of all staff to exercise care, caution and wisdom in all communication with students.

Further to the above:

- a teacher/student relationship alone is not considered sufficient to be a valid context in which teachers may justifiably have currently enrolled students as online social media 'friends'. Staff should be using school administrated accounts rather than their own personal profiles;
- where a staff member has what he/she believes to be a valid context for communication with students using social media, beyond that approved as part of the educational program of the school, the use of 'group' pages must be used in order that the context is clear and transparent. Examples might include Facebook groups for churches, youth groups and sporting team;
- group pages should include at least two staff to oversee the group; and
- if there is a requirement for students to be in a group page with staff, parents should be included in any online communication and or permission given by parents for their child to join certain groups on Facebook etc. Particularly since some applications e.g. Facebook require a minimum age limit.

Where community networking sites or online learning communities are to be used as part of the educational program at the school, staff shall first obtain approval from the Principal or nominated delegate. Teachers are strongly encouraged to use SEQTA (the school's learning management system) as the primary platform for such learning activities

Disciplinary measures in relation to proven incidents of inappropriate use of social media by staff could include action ranging from, but not limited to, counselling through to dismissal from their roles depending upon the severity of incidents. Staff should seek advice from the Principal as soon as is practicable when they become aware of abusive, threatening or defamatory content on social media that is directed at the school, or at its students or employees.

- **Students:** all schools shall periodically ensure that students are informed in relation to the safe and appropriate use of social media, and shall be encouraged and supported in their efforts to make responsible decisions and to develop positive social media values and practices. Schools will, when appropriate, educate students about online safety and the risks of social media with regard to grooming and/or other threats to their safety.

Students should be conscious at all times that their social media activity reflects upon themselves, their families and the school; that all social media activity contributes to their 'digital footprint' and that inappropriate use of social media can have long-term adverse implications for themselves and others.

Disciplinary measures in relation to proven incidents of inappropriate use of social media by students shall be determined in accordance with each school's Student Discipline & Behaviour Policy and other relevant policies, and any related procedures, and may include the suspension or expulsion of students.

4. References and Additional Related Documents

- CST's Parent Code of Conduct

5. Record Keeping

5.1 This Policy is to be kept for three (3) years until review, unless there is a significant legislative or organisational change requiring earlier review.

5.2 The master copy is kept in <https://www.cst.tas.edu.au/services> under Policy Documents, online in read-only in PDF form. Any printed or downloaded copies are deemed uncontrolled.

GENERAL DEFINITION OF TERMS:

Where referred to in this document:

Christian Schools Tasmania (CST) means an association of Christians who, through their Board of Directors, are legally responsible for Calvin Christian School, Channel Christian School, Emmanuel Christian School and Northern Christian School.

The School refers to the CST school to whom the Policy applies.

The Board means the Board of Directors of Christian Schools Tasmania.

Executive is a forum including the Chief Executive Officer, Principals and the Business Manager.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is the person appointed to the position of Chief Executive Officer of the Association, or a person acting from time to time in that position.

Principal means the person charged with responsibility for the operation of an Association school, or a person acting from time to time in that position.

Compliance Manager is the person appointed to the position of Compliance Manager of the Association, or a person acting from time to time in that position.

Business Manager is the person appointed to the position of Business Manager of the Association, or a person acting from time to time in that position.

Manager means a person appointed to a managerial position within CST.

Staff is any person either employed by CST either on a casual, part-time or permanent basis as well as volunteers, contractors and sub-contractors engaged in working at a CST School.

Parent is a person who is the legal guardian of a child enrolled at a CST school.

Child means any student enrolled at a CST school.