



Chairo Christian School

Social Media Policy

Policy Number: SOC-001.L3.02

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Next Review: June 2020

1. **Preamble**

- 1.1. Chairo seeks to “cultivate community that reflects the love of Christ” (Vision Statement). The love and example of Jesus Christ is acknowledged as the foundation and guiding principle of all relationships within the school community in a partnership that seeks to encourage, nurture and support each member.
- 1.2. Biblical injunctions of living in the light, purity of thought, and communications that are based in integrity should underpin the use of social media by members of the school community (see Ephesians 4 – 5; Colossians 3; 1 Thessalonians 4).
- 1.3. 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; and/or upon individual members of the school community; and/or upon relationships with or between members of the school community.
- 1.4. 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 item 1.3 above.
- 1.5. While this policy is applicable most obviously to staff members and students, the principles also apply to parents and other members of the school community where social media activity impacts directly upon the school or members of the school community.

2. **Definitions**

- 2.1. *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).
- 2.2. *Teaching staff members*, for the purposes of this policy, refers only to staff members registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching. All other staff members, including teaching support staff members, are therefore classified as *non-teaching staff members*.
- 2.3. *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.

3. **Details**

3.1. **General**

- 3.1.1. 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 policies.



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- 3.1.2. 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.
- 3.1.3. The Executive Leadership of the 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.
- 3.1.4. The 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.
- 3.1.5. Any social media sites or pages bearing the name of the school, or intended to be official school sites or pages, shall be approved by the Executive Principal or his/her delegate prior to creation and should represent the school accurately and positively.

3.2. Staff

- 3.2.1. Teaching staff members (and other staff members as far as is reasonably possible in the performance of their duties) are expected to comply with the *Victorian Teaching Profession Code of Conduct* and the *Victorian Teaching Profession Code of Ethics*.
- 3.2.2. Staff members hold a unique position of trust and influence, and are always in a professional relationship with Chairo 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 *Victorian Teaching Profession Code of Conduct* and that a valid context exists for any communication.
- 3.2.3. Staff members 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: (1) to disclose confidential information about the school; (2) in a way that may disparage or otherwise adversely impact the school or members of the school community; (3) in a way that is contrary to the school's standards of behaviour and ethos; and (4) to post inappropriate material that could damage their own reputation.
- 3.2.4. Staff members are expected to exercise wisdom when making personal points of view on social media. It may be appropriate for staff members to indicate when a view is personal and when it is the school's official opinion regarding a particular matter.
- 3.2.5. Staff members shall not allow the use of social media during working hours to have an adverse impact upon the performance of their duties.
- 3.2.6. Staff members 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.
- 3.2.7. Staff members shall exercise particular care and professional discretion when choosing with whom they will interact socially online. This applies in relation to currently enrolled Chairo students, as well as to past students and parents of students.
- 3.2.8. In general, staff members should **not** have currently enrolled Chairo students as online social media "friends". While it is appreciated that many staff members will have connections and contact with currently enrolled Chairo students for a wide range of reasons beyond the school context, this does not negate the professional responsibility of all staff members to exercise care, caution and wisdom in all communication with students.



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3.2.9. Further to item 3.2.8 above:

- A teacher/student relationship alone is not considered sufficient to be a valid context in which Chairo teachers may justifiably have currently enrolled Chairo students as online social media “friends”.
- 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 is strongly encouraged in order that the context is clear and transparent. Examples might include Facebook groups for churches, youth groups and sporting teams.

3.2.10. Where community networking sites or online learning communities are to be used as part of the educational program at the school, staff members or sub-schools shall first obtain approval from the Executive Principal or his/her delegate. Teachers are strongly encouraged to use Linc (the school’s learning management system) as the primary platform for such learning activities.

3.2.11. Disciplinary measures in relation to proven incidents of inappropriate use of social media by staff members could include action ranging from, but not limited to, counselling through to dismissal from their roles depending upon the severity of incidents.

3.2.12. Staff members should also refer to the *Electronic Communication & Information Technology Policy, Equal Opportunity & Respectful Workplace Policy, Bullying (Workplace) Policy, Privacy Policy, Staff Conduct & Professional Practice Policy* and *Staff & Students Professional Boundaries Policy*.

3.2.13. Staff members should seek advice from the Executive 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.

3.3. Students

3.3.1. The school 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. The school 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.

3.3.2. 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.

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

3.3.4. Students should see also the *Electronic Communication & Information Technology Policy, Bullying (Students) Policy, Student Discipline & Behaviour Policy, Student Code of Conduct, Personal Electronic Devices Policy, Privacy Policy* and *Equal Opportunity & Respectful Workplace Policy*.