Social Networking Policy for Bishops

Descriptions

Pupils in South Africa and across the world are now becoming more and more engaged in social networking, blogging, wikis and many other forms of cyber-communication. Schools are now being challenged in how these activities can be encouraged to develop in constructive and educative ways, especially in classrooms and as part of the learning experiences at school, while at the same time schools are also having to manage these activities to avoid the possible risks which can follow from careless or malicious abuse of these activities, particularly outside of school. Social media can also be used to improve communication between the various parts of any school community.

Social media can be described as any form of online publication or presence that allows users to engage in multi-directional conversations in or around the content on the website. Social media includes but is not limited to Facebook, Ning, Twitter, YouTube, MXit, blogs, wikis, social bookmarking, document sharing and email.

Institutions need to establish clear Policies and Guidelines which are acceptable to the school, the teachers, parents and pupils. Bishops has long espoused the use of IT as an element of our mainstream practice both in the delivery of the curriculum and in attendant administration of education. The Policies and Guidelines laid out in this document serve both to encourage and extend the use of these media in constructive and educative ways, as well as limiting and containing the possibilities of destructive, or counter-productive instances.

Policy

This Policy applies to all sectors of the school – teachers, administrators, Parents and boys.

- When teachers are using or allowing the use of social media in schoolwork either in classrooms or as required work outside of classrooms, they should regard participation in such online media as an extension of their classrooms and anything which is permitted in class is acceptable online, and anything which would be unacceptable in a classroom should also be unacceptable online.
- In particular any bullying, insulting, racial or sexist language, or derogatory or offensive comment is forbidden, as is any practice which is at odds with the school's values and practices.
- Nothing should take place online which might bring the school into disrepute.

- Staff, parents or pupils should not abuse any privileged or confidential information they might have access to in any way in private social networking media.
- Teachers should not befriend on Facebook any of their pupils who are still at school, except in the case of a site specifically set up for professional purposes.
- Where staff, parents or boys are engaging in online activities outside of direct classroom or boarding house activities, they must remember that social media are by their very nature public documents, and appropriate care needs to be taken when using them.
- Where staff are identified with the school and are engaged in inappropriate fashion, the school can intervene to prevent reputational damage to the school. Such abuse of the media could result in disciplinary action.
- Where boys are identified with the school and are engaging in inappropriate fashion, the school will intervene to prevent damage either to the school or to the individuals involved. When boys conduct themselves inappropriately without being identified as connected with the school, parents must accept their roles in managing the private activities of their children. They should not expect the school to police the private and out-of school activities of pupils of the school; but the school might choose to intervene in such situations if it is in the best interests of the child to do so.

Guidelines

These guidelines for pupils are provided as support and guidance to ensure that practices do not result in transgressions of policy.

- Be responsible for whatever you write. Be aware of what you post online. Social media venues are very public. What you contribute leaves a digital footprint for all to see. Do not post anything you wouldn't want friends, enemies, parents, teachers, or a future employer to see.
- Be cautious about publishing photographs, providing personal details including surname, phone numbers, addresses, birthdates and picture.
- Where there is a possibility that you may be identified with Bishops, you should act in a manner which is consistent with the general philosophies and values of the school, and does not bring the school into disrepute.
- Follow the school's code of conduct when writing online. It is acceptable to disagree with someone else's opinions, but if you do,

respond in a respectful way. Make sure that criticism is constructive and not hurtful.

- Do not share your password with anyone else, and change your passwords regularly to protect your privacy.
- Do your own work! Do not use other people's intellectual property without their permission. It is a violation of copyright law to copy and paste other's thoughts. When paraphrasing another's idea(s) be sure to cite your source with the URL. It is good practice to hyperlink to your sources.
- Be aware that pictures may also be protected under copyright laws. Verify you have permission to use the image or establish that it is under Creative Commons attribution.
- How you represent yourself online is an extension of yourself. Do not misrepresent yourself by using someone else's identity, or by creating a fictional persona which can be linked back to you.
- Blog and wiki posts should be well written. Follow writing conventions including proper grammar, capitalization, and punctuation. If you edit someone else's work be sure it is in the spirit of improving the writing.
- If you run across inappropriate material that makes you feel uncomfortable, or is not respectful, tell a member of staff right away.

Guidelines for the use of social networking sites by professional staff.

- Do not accept pupils as friends on personal social networking sites: decline any pupil-initiated friend requests, and do not initiate on-line friendships with pupils.
- Remember that people classified as "friends" have the ability to download and share your information with others.
- Post only what you want the world to see. Imagine your colleagues, your pupils, or their parents visiting your site. It is not like posting something to your web site or blog and then realizing that a story or photo should be taken down. On a social networking site, once you post something it may be available, even after it is removed from the site.
- Do not discuss pupils or co-workers or publicly criticize school policies or personnel.
- Be aware of your profile's security and privacy settings. At a minimum, educators should have all privacy settings set to "only friends". "Friends of friends" and "Networks and Friends" open your content to a

large group of unknown people. Your privacy and that of your family may be at risk.

- Do not say or do anything that you would not say or do as a teacher in the classroom. (Remember that all online communications are stored and can be monitored.)
- Have a clear statement of purpose and outcomes for the use of the networking tool.
- Establish a code of conduct for all network participants.
- Exercise caution with regards to exaggeration, colourful language, guesswork, obscenity, copyrighted materials, legal conclusions, and derogatory remarks or characterizations.
- Weigh whether a particular posting puts your effectiveness as a teacher at risk.
- Due to security risks, be cautious when installing the external applications that work with the social networking site. Examples of these sites are calendar programs and games.
- Run updated malware protection to avoid infections of spyware and adware that social networking sites might place on your computer.
- Be careful not to fall for phishing scams that arrive via email or on your Facebook wall, providing a link for you to click, which leads to a fake login page.
- If a staff member learns of information, on the social networking site, that falls under the mandatory reporting guidelines, they must report it as required by law.