ST. CONLETH'S COLLEGE

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

INTRODUCTION

This policy has been developed to provide guidelines for social media usage by St. Conleth's students and to provide clear direction on the importance of protecting the school community's reputation and confidential information.

Social media refers to social and professional networking platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, YouTube, LinkedIn, Snapchat, Instagram, TikTok, blogs, message boards and forums and other similar online facilities.

Students should be mindful of what they post on social media, who can see it and how it can be linked back to the School. Misuse of social media can cause injury to others and can have a negative impact on the reputation of the School. Social media communications are never truly private and once information is published it becomes part of a permanent record.

Students are at all times prohibited from using or publishing information on social media which has the potential to negatively impact any member of the school community e.g.:

- publishing defamatory, abusive, or offensive material concerning any pupil, volunteer, member of School management, parent(s), visitor, or other member of the School community.

- publishing any confidential or sensitive information concerning the School or members of the School community.

- publishing material that might reasonably be considered to have the effect of damaging the reputation of the School.

The School reserves the right to take disciplinary action, in alignment with the School's Code of Behaviour, in respect of students who engage in prohibited conduct and conduct in breach of this policy.

Given the ever developing and changing nature of social media and the internet, the guidelines and policy will be reviewed and adapted as required.

This policy should be read in conjunction with existing school policies:

- Code of Behaviour
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Child Safeguarding Statement
- IT Acceptable Use Policy
- Mobile Phone Policy

GUIDELINES ON ACCEPTABLE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA BY STUDENTS

(i) **Responsibility:** A student is responsible for his/her social media usage, for ensuring that private and confidential information is respected and protected at all times and for compliance with the terms and conditions of the relevant social media platform.

(ii) **Privacy & Confidential information:** Confidential information pertaining to the School, or the School Community must be respected and maintained at all times. Personal information about any students, parents, employees, or volunteers must not be divulged or discussed on social media sites.

(iii) **Unacceptable use:** Students must not create, publish, download, or communicate material/content that could reasonably be regarded as defamatory, inappropriate, discriminatory, offensive, hostile, pornographic, damaging to a member of the School Community or referring to a third person without their permission. Uploading, forwarding, or linking to the aforementioned content is also unacceptable. Students must never reveal sensitive details whether relating to other students, the School, its employees, volunteers, parents, and other members of the School community on social media sites.

(iv) **Behaviour:** Postings by a student on a social media site that are defamatory, inappropriate, discriminatory, offensive, hostile, pornographic, divulging personal data without consent or damaging to the reputation of a member of the School Community will be addressed pursuant to the School's Code of Conduct and may result in disciplinary sanction up to and including suspension or expulsion.

(v) **Identity:** Where a student chooses to identify him/herself on social media as a student at the School, s/he must make it clear that their communications do not represent the School, its ethos, position, opinions, or views. The student must write in the first person and state clearly s/he is posting in a personal capacity and not on behalf of the School and state clearly that the views expressed are his/her own and not those of the School. Students should at all times be mindful of their communications and possible consequences.

(vi) **Be mindful and respectful:** Students must be mindful that their conduct not only reflects on themselves but also reflects on their School. Students should exercise sound judgement, common sense and respect when participating in social media. Students should not use insulting, offensive or disparaging language. If in doubt, do not publish or post anything. Information published online is permanent and never completely private.

REPORTING

Students should immediately report to the Principal / Deputy Principal any inappropriate, abusive, or defamatory or other unacceptable social media activity concerning students or other members of the School community. Such reports will be fully and confidentially investigated, the reported activity will be reviewed and, where appropriate, the content will be reported using the relevant online reporting mechanism.

EDUCATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

St Conleths College plays a crucial role in educating their students about responsible and safe social media usage. Here are some key areas where Social Media information is delivered via Wellbeing, SPHE, English and other subjects:

1. Curriculum Integration:

   - Digital literacy and online safety lessons are integrated into the curriculum at appropriate age levels.

   - Students are taught about the risks and benefits of social media, including cyberbullying, privacy concerns, digital footprints, and online reputation management.

2. Critical Thinking Skills:

   - Students are provided with opportunities to develop critical thinking skills to evaluate online content critically.

   - Students are taught how to identify misinformation, fake news, and potential online scams.

3. Digital Citizenship:

   - Students are taught about the rights and responsibilities of digital citizenship, including respecting others' privacy, practicing empathy, and contributing positively to online communities.

4. Cyberbullying Prevention:

   - Students are educated on the awareness of cyberbullying and encouraged to promote a culture of kindness and respect online.

   - Students are made aware of the signs of cyberbullying, how to respond appropriately, and where to seek help if they or someone they know is being bullied online.

5. Privacy and Security Awareness:

   - Students are taught about the importance of protecting their privacy online and maintaining strong security measures.

   - Students are given practical guidance on setting privacy settings on social media accounts and avoiding sharing personal information with strangers.

6. Parental Engagement:

   - Parents are encouraged to get involved in school initiatives related to social media education through workshops, seminars, or informational sessions.

7. Partnerships and Collaboration:

   - St Conleths College has a strong relationship with community organisations, in particular An Garda Síochána and their Community Liaison team for guidance and support on legal and cyber related issues.

By prioritising social media education and integrating it into various aspects of the school curriculum and culture, St Conleths College empowers their students to navigate the digital world safely, responsibly, and ethically.

PARENT/GUARDIAN RESPONSIBILITY

As a parent, it is crucial to be actively involved in your child's social media usage to ensure their safety and responsible behaviour online. Here are some key responsibilities parents should uphold:

1. Education and Awareness:

    - Educate your child about the potential risks and consequences of inappropriate social media use, such as cyberbullying, online predators, and reputational harm.

    - Foster open communication with your child, encouraging them to discuss their online activities and any concerns they may have.

2. Setting Boundaries and Guidelines:

    - Establish clear rules and guidelines for your child's social media usage, including appropriate platforms, time limits, and privacy settings.

    - Monitor your child's online activity regularly, ensuring they adhere to the agreed-upon rules and guidelines.

3. Modelling Positive Behaviour:

    - Set a positive example by demonstrating responsible and respectful behaviour on social media yourself.

    - Avoid oversharing personal information or engaging in inappropriate online interactions that could influence your child's behaviour.

4. Privacy and Security:

    - Help your child set strong privacy settings on their social media accounts to control who can view their posts and interact with them.

    - Teach your child about the importance of safeguarding their personal information and avoiding sharing sensitive details online.

5. Monitoring and Supervision:

    - Regularly monitor your child's social media activity, either by friending or following them on their accounts or using parental control tools.

    - Be vigilant for signs of cyberbullying, harassment, or other harmful interactions, and intervene promptly if necessary.

6. Support and Guidance:

    - Offer support and guidance to your child if they encounter any negative experiences or challenges on social media.

    - Encourage them to seek help from a trusted adult if they feel uncomfortable or threatened by someone online.

    - Report any incident involving your child to the school Principal.

7. Stay Informed:

- Stay informed about the latest trends, apps, and online risks affecting children and teens.

- Keep the lines of communication open with other parents and school authorities to share information and support each other in promoting safe social media use among children.

- Attend any workshops recommended by the school. These parent/guardian workshops can sometimes run as a follow up from a workshop provided to students within St Conleths College.

By actively engaging in their child's social media journey and providing guidance and support, parents can help ensure a positive and safe online experience for their children.

ENFORCEMENT

The School will monitor social media usage on School computers, laptops, mobiles, tablets, notebook computers, smartphones, School accounts and School user names. The foregoing IT resources are the School's property and are to be used for legitimate School business.
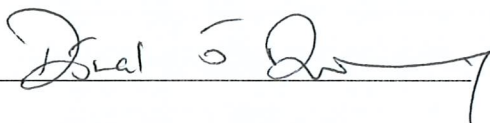
A reported or suspected breach of this policy is a serious matter and will be investigated by School Management. The School reserves the right to use information that is expressly prohibited by this policy, and which comes to School management's attention whether through monitoring or otherwise for disciplinary purposes.

Non-compliance by Students with any aspect of this policy may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including expulsion.

This policy was ratified and adopted by Unitary Manager Tony Kilcommons on 13/05/2024.

Signed: _____   Signed: _____

CEO St. Conleth's College   **Principal St. Conleth's College**