



21 February 2011

RATIONALE

The purpose of this policy is to provide direction on the acceptable use of social media by staff employed in the Catholic systemic schools in the Archdiocese of Sydney. The intent of the policy is to assist staff to choose appropriate online community sites for use with students and to maintain professional standards in their own use of social media.

This policy addresses the use of social media sites in student learning activities and in teacher and student relationships. The policy also differentiates between online community sites and personal social networking sites.

- **Online community sites** such as nings, wikis and some educational blogs are used primarily for collaboration and shared knowledge construction.
- **Personal social networking sites** are centered on an individual rather than a group and include Facebook, MySpace and other related sites. Such sites are used primarily for sharing personal information such as photos and updates.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. Online behaviour should at all times demonstrate a Christ-centered respect for the dignity of each person.
2. The Child Protection protocols and policies of the CEO Sydney must always be observed.
3. Staff and student online interaction must occur only in an educational context.
4. Staff and students must behave in an ethical manner when interacting and using online community sites and resources.
5. Staff personal social networking online must be congruent with the professional standards expected of a Catholic teacher.
6. Professional development programs are provided in schools for staff on the appropriate use of social media.
7. Educational programs are provided for students to ensure the appropriate use of social network and community learning sites on the Internet.

POLICY

STAFF USE OF ONLINE COMMUNITY SITES FOR LEARNING

- Staff are encouraged to use online learning communities with their students in order to achieve educational outcomes. Currently these sites include wikis, blogs and nings.
- When using online community sites with students consideration must always be given to the age and developmental level of the students.
- Staff 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 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 for educational purposes.
- Staff must respect student's rights to privacy in academic work, records and results when posting online.
- The learning activity must not be linked back to student's own personal social network pages.
- Social networking sites such as Facebook, MySpace or similar must not be used by staff as learning tools for students.

1. PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED WHEN USING ONLINE LEARNING COMMUNITIES WITH STUDENTS

- Discuss any use of online community sites with the Principal or his/her delegate outlining the activity and its educational goals.
- If not included in use of internet agreement, obtain parental permission before students are asked to register with online community websites.
- Keep a record of the student's login names (students should not publish their real names on a public site).
- Clearly communicate to students their responsibility for appropriate interaction with others and suitable content posting online.

- Obtain permission from the Principal before school or staff photographs or other identifying photographs are posted online.
- Ensure another teacher or member of the school leadership team has full administrator access to the site.
- Monitor the site frequently and actively review the content.

2. STAFF ARE REQUIRED TO EDUCATE STUDENTS USING SOCIAL MEDIA OF ANY KIND TO:

- Respect themselves and others when publishing or communicating online.
- Keep communication channels transparent and supervised by adults.
- Create a sensible/ plain username or identity.
- Set social network sites to private security setting. This usually means 'friends only' can see the student's pages and details.
- Keep personal information private.
- Not share usernames and passwords with anyone.
- Report any attacks or inappropriate content directed at them.

POLICY

STAFF PERSONAL SOCIAL NETWORK PAGES

- Social networking sites such as Facebook or MySpace must not be used by staff as a platform for learning activities with students.
- Staff should not accept students as 'friends' on their own social network sites or interact with students on social networking sites.
- Staff are advised to use professional discretion before accepting ex-students or parents of current students as friends.
- Staff must not discuss students or co-workers or publicly criticise school policies or personnel on social networking sites.
- Staff must not post images that include students on social networking sites.
- Appropriate professional standards required of staff employed in Catholic systemic schools must be observed. These standards include but are not limited to documents outlined in the supporting document section of this policy.

BASES OF DISCRETION

MAINTAINING PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS (STAFF SOCIAL NETWORKING PAGES)

- Weigh whether a particular posting could put your effectiveness as a teacher at risk. Post only what you want the world to see.
- Do not use commentary deemed to be defamatory, obscene, proprietary, or libellous.
- Exercise caution with regards to exaggeration, colourful language, guesswork, copyrighted materials, legal conclusions, and derogatory remarks or characterisations.
- Discuss with personal friends the need for discretion when they post images or information about you on their own social network pages. Explain to them that once material is posted and identifiable, it is impossible to control its rapid sharing into school communities.
- Maintain control of security, privacy and access to your personal pages and information.
- Visit your profile's security and privacy settings. At a minimum, educators should have all privacy settings set to 'only friends'. Do not use 'Friends of Friends' and 'Networks and Friends' as these open your content to a large group of unknown people. Your privacy and that of your family may be a risk.
- Be cautious when installing the external applications that work with the social networking site. Examples of these sites are calendar programs and games.

EVALUATION AND REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed by March 2012.

EXPLANATORY NOTES/GLOSSARY

- a. **Web 2.0:** Web 2.0 is defined as the 'read-write' web; it provides all the services and applications to allow individuals to **co-create content, collaborate and share** it with others. It supports **user-generated content**, that is content created by 'users', rather than specialist authors or publishers' using a variety of affordable technologies like blogs, podcasts and wikis, and encourages the social aspect of the Web, eg through the use of **social media** like blogs, wikis, social bookmarking tools and social networks. These tools are privately used by staff and students and increasingly are providing a learning platform for the construction of knowledge.
- b. **Social network sites:** Web based external, commercial, non-educational media sites for creation of connections and maintaining relationships and communities. There are many types including those intended for personal networking and those intended for group collaboration.
- c. **Personal social network sites:** Internet services intended for use primarily for private social networking. These sites include *Facebook, Bebo* and *MySpace*.
- d. **Professional online community network sites:** Sites intended for group collaboration and shared knowledge construction. Examples include wikis, blogs and ning sites.
- e. **Friends and 'friending':** Friends are those invited to access personal information on social network sites. Friends have access to photographs, text postings, and comments on a person's page. There is no limit to the number of friends a person can have and many teenagers may acquire hundreds.

The process of friending requires an invitation to be sent to an individual or a request to become a friend to be accepted by the owner of the page.

- f. **Privacy settings:** The creator of a page can set permissions to control who can view content on the page. The setting 'everyone' is usually the default on social network pages; but the page owner can also restrict all or parts of the content to be viewed only by 'friends of friends', 'friends only', or customise the access to the page.
- g. **Registering:** When creating a personal page or registering to join an online community, users must first register with the site. This requires the user to provide their name and email address. The amount of information required varies. Many sites invite users to add a personal profile containing a photo and further personal information.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Current CEO policies which are related to this policy include:

- Student Acceptable Use Agreement Form
- Staff Acceptable Use Policy
- Child Protection Code of Professional Standards for Catholic School Employees
- Strategies for Dealing With Cyber bullying
- Enrolment Package Policy Statements
- Workplace Realities in the Catholic School – A Framework For Those Employed In Catholic Education
- Letter of Appointment for Full Time/Part Time Teachers in the Sydney System of Catholic Schools

REFERENCES

Australian Catholic Bishops Pastoral Letter on Internet Safety

<http://www.youtube.com/ACBCcomms>

'Social Networking Protocol for the Catholic Church in Australia' published by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, December 2009.

<http://www.catholic.org.au/>

Approved as policy for Catholic systemic schools in the Archdiocese of Sydney by the Executive Director, Dr. Dan White on 17 February 2011.