

## **SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY FOR LORETO SCHOOLS IN INDIA**

### **Introduction**

Social Media has slowly become an integral part of our lives and can offer incredible benefits such as connecting people irrespective of geographical distance, information dissemination, acting as a vast and freely accessible source of learning and also providing employment opportunities.

In school, not only are students constantly on social media, but their parents, staff members and others connected with the school, use it daily. The use of social media in a school setting can come with certain risks and challenges, including cyberbullying, inappropriate content, and violations of privacy. To address these concerns, schools need to establish a comprehensive social media policy that outlines acceptable use of social media, establishes guidelines for appropriate behavior, and clearly states the consequences therein for any violation of these guidelines.

### **What is Social Media ?**

Social Media refers to websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking.

Some examples of Social Media Networking platforms include :

For Social Networking -

1. Twitter
2. Facebook
3. Instagram
4. Pinterest
5. Tik tok
6. Tumblr
7. Google

For messaging :

1. Hangout
2. WhatsApp
3. Messenger

4. Snapchat
5. Telegram
6. Omegle
7. Viber

For Streaming :

1. YouTube
2. Vimeo
3. Periscope
4. Twitch
5. Live me
6. Stream now

Others :

1. LinkedIn
2. Flickr
3. Quora
4. Reddit
5. Discord

### **Scope of the policy**

This policy sets out strategies for social networking. Social networking activities conducted online outside the sphere of work, such as blogging, involvement in any social networking sites such as Facebook or Twitter and posting material, images or comments on sites such as You Tube can have a negative effect on an organization's reputation or image.

In addition, Loreto schools have a firm commitment to safeguarding children in all aspects of its work. This policy has been written to set out the key principles and code of conduct that we expect of all Staff members, Students, Parents, Alumni members, vendors associated with the school and other stakeholders, with respect to their responsibilities in connection with the use of social networking sites.

This policy applies to all school-related social media activities, including:

1. Official school accounts
2. Personal accounts of Students, Staff Members, Parents and the Alumni.
3. School-related groups or pages

## **Guiding Principles**

1. **Respect:** Treat others online with kindness and respect.
2. **Welfare:** Protect personal and school information.
3. **Accountability:** Do not post content that reflects negatively on the school and the users themselves.
4. **Transparency:** To clearly identify accounts used officially by the school to prevent random and fake accounts from spreading unverified information.
5. **Supportive supervision:** While guiding members of the school community regarding the proper usage of Social Media, we will also need to identify the measures that may be taken in case of violation of the principles.

## **What is a Social Media Policy ?**

A Social Media Policy provides guidance to the school community on how to safely and productively use social media to maximize the range of benefits it offers but at same time lessen/mitigate the risks associated with it.

## **Objectives**

1. To inform the school community on school requirements and expectations regarding use of social media platforms for both educational and personal purposes.
2. To inform the school community about the risks associated with the use/ misuse of social media and how to mitigate these risks.
3. To ensure that the privacy and safety of all the members of the school community are protected.
4. To ensure that members of the school community do not compromise the security of their own personal information or the School's information assets.
5. To define the responsibilities of members of the school community as users of the School's social media accounts.
6. To outline channels for addressing issues or concerns
7. To create a safe and secure environment for the Staff and Students of the institution in keeping with the Loreto School's Excellence Framework.

In this policy, the word Staff includes not just the permanent employees serving the school, but also temporary and casual staff, agency staff, and volunteers working with the school.

In this policy, the word Parents is used to mean the parents, carers and others with parental responsibility for a pupil in the school.

## **PART I**

### **GUIDELINES FOR THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA BY ALL STAKEHOLDERS ASSOCIATED WITH THE SCHOOL.**

The Stakeholders include Students, Staff Members, Parents, Alumni Members, Support Staff and Third Party associates including Vendors and Service Providers, serving the institutions.

#### **1.1 STUDENTS :**

1. Students must not post or promote content that harasses, bullies or otherwise intimidates others.
2. They must not use offensive or threatening language or resort to personal abuse towards other members of the school community.
3. They must not cause or coerce others to harass, bully or otherwise intimidate members of the school community.
4. They must not post anything with the intention of blackmailing or extorting money from anyone.
5. They must not incite violence or hatred through their posts.
6. Their posts or content must not be abusive in nature and must not relate to an individual's age, disability, gender, civil or social status, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation or political belief.
7. They must not engage in trolling or body shaming through their posts and comments on others' posts.
8. They must not post inappropriate images, photos, videos, and audio recordings unbecoming of a member of the school community.
9. They must be aware of the terms and conditions of various Social Media sites and that many of them have age restrictions for their use. In India, the advisable age is 18.
10. They must respect the rights of others.
11. They must be aware that Social Media sites and applications are public forums, and they must be careful about what they post.
12. They must not create and use fake accounts, impersonating another member of the school community and post content or attempt to connect with others.
13. They must not malign or intimidate other members of the school community.
14. They must not make comments that will defame the school or members of the school community.

15. They must not upload videos, audio clippings or photographs of any member of the school community without the consent of the concerned individuals or authorities.
16. They must not not upload any video or photographs of any student wearing the school uniform or bearing an identity of the school. Their display photograph too must not show them in their school uniform.
17. They must not spread rumours or false information about any member of the school community.
18. No photos and videos of individuals connected with the school, must be uploaded on Social Media without the consent of the concerned individual(s) and authorities.
19. No information related to the school, internal school discussions, or information about students, staff members or other parents should be shared on Social Media.
20. They must not engage in disseminating false information, rumours or false information regarding the school and members of the school community.
21. The school is not responsible for any inflammatory information or posts that are shared on unofficial WhatsApp groups created by members of the school community. So schools should make the students aware of the complexity of the situation.
22. No student should attempt to start any sort of campaign via any social media platform, to collect any donation for any cause/event/person, related to the school.
23. Anonymous sites must not be accessed as there is a high risk to the personal safety of the student and can result in emotional, psychological and physical distress.

## **1.2 PARENTS :**

1. Parents must be aware that social media platforms have age restrictions and must ensure that their child, if below the stipulated age, does not possess a social media account. Necessary legal compliance is required to be followed with regard to this. Parents need to monitor their child's activities on social media platforms.
2. Parents must not create a personal social media account for their children to use.
3. Parents must not upload photos and videos of individuals connected with the school or students in school uniform, without the consent of the concerned individuals or students or school.
4. Parents must not share any information related to the school, internal school discussions, or information about students, staff members or other parents.
5. Parents must not engage in disseminating false information or rumours regarding the school and members of the school community.

6. Parents are requested not to click pictures/ make reels/ record videos of their ward / any other student / of any staff member / any other parent/ or themselves within the school campus and outside the campus if the ward is in school uniform.
7. Parents must not use Social Media as a platform to express grievances. Instead, they must approach the school to seek redressal of the concerned issue.
8. If parents/carers become aware of inappropriate use of social media by their own or other people's children, they should contact the School so that the School can address the issue and resolve it.
9. All communication with the School Staff must be sent via the permitted school channels such as a note in the school diary.
10. Parents must not post anything on Social Media that will bring disrepute to the school.
11. All content, images and videos of the students' work, achievements and performances will be uploaded on the School Website with the consent of the parents, as given and signed in the Consent form in the School Diary.
12. The School is not responsible for any content posted in unofficial social media groups. Such content is unverified by the school. **Please note - the school will convey information only through its official channels.**
13. It is advisable that content posted in the school website is not reproduced without the consent of the school or the individual who has created and posted the content.

### **1.3 THE ALUMNI AND PAST PUPILS**

1. No ex student should open any account on any social media platform using the school's name or logo.
2. All ex students are requested/ expected not to upload any information/news/ messages/notices related to the school, on their personal accounts without the consent of the School authorities.
3. No photographs or videos of Students and Staff Members taken in school during school programmes/events should be uploaded by past pupils on their personal social media account.
4. No past pupils should take and post pictures/ record videos/ make reels while visiting the school for any purpose (except the School Reunion), without prior permission of the school authorities.
5. No content should be posted on Social Media platforms harassing, intimidating or maligning the school community.
6. Under no circumstances may fundraisers or any sort of campaign be organised using the school's name.

## **1.4 SERVICE PROVIDERS**

All outside service providers such as digital vendors, books and uniform suppliers, cable repairers, internet service providers, contractors, labourers, shopkeepers, caterers, waiters, cooks and mechanics are to adhere to the following rules:

1. No one should take any pictures or record videos of any students/ staff members/ parents or of any place/room (such as the basement, corridor, staircase, landing, rooftop, laboratories, washrooms or classrooms) inside the school campus.
2. If any video recording or picture is needed to be taken for the purpose of proceeding with their work (for instance, the picture of a particular router, napkin vending machine parts or some equipment) the school authorities need to be aware of it.
3. Any picture or video recordings made by any service providers, for any reason **SHOULD NOT** be uploaded on **ANY SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNT**.
4. If a parent or caregiver has objected to his / her ward's picture being uploaded on the school's social media platform, the school must adhere to it.
5. Video recording or pictures can be taken within the school premises only after prior approval of the school authorities in writing.

## **1.5 VENDORS**

Vendors include suppliers of books, hardware items, uniforms and other such items that are needed by the school.

1. No vendor should click pictures, make reels or record videos of any student, staff member, parent or of themselves within the school campus.
2. No one should take any pictures or record videos of any area inside the school campus, such as the main gate, entrance, garden, parking, water cooler or basement.

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## **1.6 SPREADING AWARENESS AMONG STAKEHOLDERS ABOUT THEIR ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY**

Apart from the **entire policy** being uploaded on the website, the following may be done to make all stakeholders aware of their role and their responsibilities:

1. All the guidelines for Support Staff, Security Guards, Vendors, Service Providers and Parents, should be translated into the vernacular languages for the benefit of those who cannot follow the English Language.
2. The points for Vendors, Service Providers and Parents may be displayed clearly on the school notice boards, both near the main entrance and beside the school main office.

3. All Service Providers, Vendors and Ex Students should sign a form/register or a document where these rules are written, as a proof of their undertaking that they have read, understood and will adhere to these rules.
4. While procuring admission for their wards, or at the beginning of every academic year, parents must fill in the Parents' Consent Form in the diary, permitting the school to upload images on its social media platforms, of their child's achievements and work in school. Parents should also sign the agreement in the diary as a proof of their undertaking that they have read, understood and will adhere to the rules given in the diary.
5. The rules for the Alumni and Past Pupils may be printed, signed and stamped by the school authority and handed over to the students appearing for their Board exams ( both class 10 and class 12), along with their examination timetable or Board exam result. This is desirable, as students are often seen clicking selfies and pictures after coming out from the Examination Hall, and uploading them on Facebook or Whatsapp.

OR

The rules for the Alumni and Past Pupils may be printed, signed by the School Principal and displayed outside the School Office.

## **1.7 SUGGESTIONS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY :**

- 1.A Social Media Committee may be set up with a Teacher and two or three students who can ensure that the policy is being implemented. If there is any misuse of Social Media aimed at hurting individuals, or if there is any form of abuse through social media platforms, the matter will be reported to the Child Protection Officers who will then deal with the case.
- 2.The committee will meet once in three months and will also be responsible for ensuring that all members of the school community are familiar with the provisions of the policy.
3. Since Loreto recognizes that Social Media is here to stay, an official page by the school can be operated by a teacher-in-charge and the Head Girl, Vice-Head Girl, Sports Captain and Sports Vice Captain.

### **NOTE :**

The policy is subject to review at the end of a specified period.

### **Communications through social media must not**

1. Discuss how the school conducts its daily operation and processes.
2. Reveal unverified school incidents.
3. Reveal future plans that have not been communicated to the public



4. Infringe intellectual property.
5. Disclose others' personal information without their permission.
6. Engage in a breach of professionalism and confidentiality of the school.

## **1.8 SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY FOR THE SCHOOL STAFF**

### **A. Principals, Vice Principals and Coordinators**

1. They should ensure that all existing and new staff members are trained and become familiar with the school's policy with regard to the use of social media.
2. They should ensure that there are opportunities to discuss the appropriate use of social networking sites by the staff as and when required.
3. They must ensure that if any issue is raised regarding violation of social media regulations laid down by the school, the issue is investigated immediately and required remedial measures are taken in accordance with the school's code of conduct and disciplinary procedures.
4. They should ensure that there is a system in place for regular monitoring of the usage of social media.
5. They will review the policy on a regular basis and make amendments as and when required after seeking permission from the Loreto Education office.
6. They will ensure that their own actions are in line with the policy.
7. Regular orientation sessions highlighting the school's Social Media Policy must be held for the Staff, Students and Parents.
8. Teachers must be encouraged to incorporate lessons on the proper usage of the digital platforms in their Value Education classes.

### **B. The Teaching and Non Teaching Staff :**

1. The Staff must be thoroughly familiar with the school's Social Media Policies. If they have any doubts or queries regarding the policy, they must seek clarification with the authorities.
2. They must at all times comply with the policy and adhere to the rules stated in the policy.
3. They must advise and support the School authorities in implementing it effectively.
4. No teacher or office staff members should send any message/news/ information, via any social media platform, to any student or guardian, academic or otherwise of any nature,

related to any school matter, unless it is absolutely urgent and has been permitted to do so by the school.

5. Any use of social media when working with pupils must be sanctioned by the school.
6. Teachers and Office Staff members are requested/advised/ expected to use their discretion while uploading personal pictures or pictures taken with their colleagues outside the school campus ( for example during a staff picnic ). It is expected that they maintain the etiquette and decorum that is expected of them as part of their profession. No photographs are to be posted without the consent of the concerned individuals.
7. Teachers must not click pictures with students on the school campus or outside and display the same on their social media handles without prior sanction from the Management.
8. Teachers must not encourage private circulation of such pictures that reveal the identity of the children, campus and the teachers of the institution they belong to.
9. No staff member should add students who are presently studying in the school or their parents to their Social Media accounts. This is to help protect their privacy.
10. Staff must report all situations where any child is at potential risk by using relevant statutory and school child protection procedures.
11. **Staff Members must not engage in social media activity while at work.**
12. Staff Members must not contribute to or access any social media content which is illegal, discriminatory, sexual, or otherwise offensive when linked in any way to the school. This will cause damage to their professional reputation and that of the school.
13. Staff Members must not use social media to criticise or insult their school, the staff, the pupils and parents. If they have a grievance or concern, they must use appropriate ways of expressing them.
14. Staff Members' personal use of social media must not interfere with their ability to maintain their professional reputation nor must it have an adverse impact on the reputation of the school.
15. Staff members must ensure that if a particular social media account they use is viewed and is accessible to the students, the display photographs they use and the content they post through these accounts must befit their image and position as staff members of the institution and must not go against the school ethos.
16. The school must respect the wishes of the parents ,as expressed in the Parents' Consent Form given to the school.
17. Except during official outings where group photographs can be clicked, avoid clicking pictures with one /two students with clear visibility of faces as this goes against the Safeguarding Policy of Loreto Schools.

**FOOTNOTE:**

The Social Media Policy has to be uploaded on the School Website

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:**

### **RELEVANT LAWS AND ACTS:**

1. Information Technology Act 2000: Section 66 (a) of this act brings prohibition and punishment to any offence which is committed via social media to hurt or cause injury to others.
2. Indian Penal Code 1860: this act provides remedies and punishment in the cases where there is damage to individual by the action of other individual and any person who violated the laws will be dealt with the provisions mentioned below:
3. Section 124A: deals with sedition.
4. Section 153A: deals with promoting enmity.
5. Section 295A: deals with intentionally insulting religion.
6. Section 499: deals with defamation.
7. Section 505: deals with public mischief.
8. Section 509: disrespecting women's modesty.

### **ONLINE LITERATURE**

1. My Online Schooling - Social Media Code of Conduct for Parents and Carers.
2. Social Media Policy for School Staff - Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council.
3. The Loreto School's Excellence Framework and Service Rules.
4. <https://www.saggartns.ie/social-media-policy/>