



# **Social Media and Acceptable Use Policy for Staff**

## **Meán Scoil Mhuire Longford**

**Chairperson:** Mr. John McGovern

**Principal:** Mrs. A. Mulrennan

**Date:** 9<sup>th</sup> November 2019

## **Mission Statement**

Meán Scoil Mhuire is a voluntary Secondary Catholic School. It is a centre for the holistic formation of girls and young women.

- (1) We respect the dignity of each person with her unique background, talents, traditions and beliefs.
- (2) We provide a pleasant disciplined atmosphere in which students can grow spiritually, morally, academically, socially and culturally.
- (3) We expose all to a rich cultural heritage and help them to acquire the knowledge and skills, which enables them to understand, appreciate and respect themselves, others and their environment.
- (4) We foster positive Christian values and self-esteem so that our students leave school with a sense of self-worth and self-esteem and are well equipped for the challenges of life.
- (5) We encourage partnership at all levels between the management, staff, parents, students and the local community.
- (6) Meán Scoil Mhuire has not only a highly respected academic tradition. We also develop creativity, leadership and social skills by promoting involvement in extra-curricular activities.

## **INTRODUCTION**

These guidelines and A.U.P. have been developed to assist all employees of the Board of management and Meán Scoil Mhuire (hereinafter referred to as “the School”) in making ethical, respectful and acceptable decisions about their professional and personal social media usage and to provide clear direction on the importance of protecting the School’s reputation and confidential information.

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

The guidelines and A.U.P. are not intended to prevent employees from engaging in social media but are intended to inform employees as to what is considered by the School to constitute appropriate / inappropriate social media usage and conduct.

For those employees who are members of the School’s teaching staff, the guidelines and A.U.P. give effect to agreed professional protocols as prescribed by the Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers (Teaching Council, June 2012) which provides that teachers should:-

*“ensure that any communication with pupils/students, colleagues, parents, school management and others is appropriate, including communication via electronic media, such as email, texting and social networking sites.”*

and

*“ensure that they do not knowingly access, download or otherwise have in their possession while engaged in school activities, inappropriate materials/images in electronic or other format.”*

All employees should be mindful of what they post on social media, who can see it and how it can be linked back to the School and work colleagues. 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.

Employees are **at all times prohibited from using or publishing information on social media which has the potential to negatively impact / reflect on the School and / or its employees and / or its students e.g.:-**

- publishing defamatory, abusive or offensive material concerning any employee, volunteer, member of School management, parent(s), student(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, up to and including dismissal, in respect of employees 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 within guidelines and policy will be reviewed and adapted as required.

This policy should be read in conjunction with staff policies which are applicable to social media usage, in particular the dignity at work, internet and email usage, data protection, the Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers and other and disciplinary policies and procedures.

## **ACCEPTABLE USAGE POLICY**

### **A. SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE ON A SOCIAL MEDIA SITE OR PROFILE ESTABLISHED IN THE COURSE OF EMPLOYMENT WHICH RELATES TO SCHOOL BUSINESS / MATTERS**

- (i) **Seek permission:** Employees must seek or have permission from the Principal / Deputy Principal(s) before setting up a site or profile relating to School business and or School matters / registering in the School's name on social media sites,

user groups, special interest forums and bulletin boards / using social media for teaching and learning purposes.

- (ii) **Property:** The property rights in a sanctioned social media account in the name of or on behalf of the School are vested in the School.
- (iii) **Responsibility:** A permitted employee 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.
- (iv) **Privacy & Confidential information:** Confidential information pertaining to the School, its employees, volunteers, students, parents and others in 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.
- (v) **Unacceptable use:** Employees must not create, publish, download or communicate material/content that could reasonably be regarded as defamatory, inappropriate, discriminatory, offensive, hostile, pornographic, damaging to the School's reputation or referring to a third person without their permission. Uploading, forwarding or linking to the aforementioned content is also unacceptable. Employees must never reveal sensitive details whether relating to the School, its employees, volunteers, students, parents and other members of the School community on social media sites.
- (vi) **Behaviour:** Postings by an employee on a social media site that are defamatory, inappropriate, discriminatory, offensive, hostile, pornographic, divulging personal data without consent or damaging to the School's reputation will be addressed pursuant to the School's disciplinary procedure and may result in disciplinary sanction up to and including dismissal.

## **B. PERSONAL SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE**

- (i) **Boundaries:** Personal profiles are not to be used to conduct school business or to communicate with students/parents. Online interaction with management, other employees and/or school contacts should be appropriate and professional in nature. Employees must not use the official School e-mail address when participating in personal social media / social media that is not related to the employee's job. Personal use of social media must not occur during working time but is restricted to free times at work.
- (ii) **Identity:** Where an employee chooses to identify him/herself on social media as an employee of the School, s/he must make it clear that their communications do not represent the School, its ethos, position, opinions or views. The employee must write in the first person and state clearly s/he is posting in a personal capacity and not in the course of employment or on behalf of the School and state clearly that the views expressed are his/her own and not those of the School. Employees should at all times be mindful of their communications and possible consequences.

- (iii) **Be mindful and respectful:** Employees must be mindful that their conduct not only reflects on themselves but also reflects on their professionalism and the School. Employees should exercise sound judgement, common sense and respect when participating in social media. Employees should not use insulting, offensive or disparaging language. If in doubt, don't publish or post anything. Information published online is permanent and never completely private.
- (iv) **Responsibility:** Employees are personally responsible for their posts and actions on social media.
- (v) **Privacy & Confidential information:** The obligations detailed at (A)(iv) above apply also to employees' personal social media usage. Do not divulge or discuss confidential information pertaining to the School, its employees, volunteers, students, parents and others in the School community and personal information, including photographs, of third persons (including employees, students, parents and other members of the School community) must not be posted, divulged or discussed without the permission of the person concerned.
- (vi) **Unacceptable use:** Employees must not create, publish, download or communicate material/content that could reasonably be regarded as defamatory, inappropriate, discriminatory, offensive, hostile, pornographic, damaging to the School's reputation or referring to a third person without their permission. Uploading, forwarding or linking to the aforementioned content is also unacceptable. Employees must never reveal sensitive details whether relating to the School, its employees, volunteers, students, parents and other members of the School community on social media sites.
- (vii) **Behaviour:** Postings by an employee on a social media site that are defamatory, inappropriate, discriminatory, offensive, hostile, pornographic, divulging personal data without consent or bring the School into disrepute will be addressed pursuant to the School's disciplinary procedure and may result in disciplinary sanction up to and including dismissal.

## **REPORTING**

Employees should immediately report to the Principal / Deputy Principal any inappropriate, abusive or defamatory or other unacceptable social media activity concerning the School, its employees, volunteers, 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.

## **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. Whilst the School will not specifically monitor social media for references to the School, its

employees, volunteers, students, parents and other members of the School community, employees should not expect privacy in this regard.

A reported or suspected breach of this policy is a serious matter and will be investigated by School management pursuant to the appropriate workplace procedure. 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 employees with any aspect of this policy may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

**Links to other Documentation:**

- Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers
- Circular 49/2018
- Teaching Council Draft Guidelines for Registered Teachers about the Use of Social Media