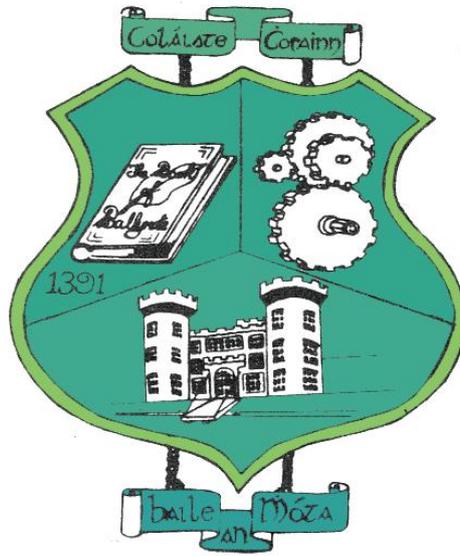# Social Media Policy

Ethos Statement

Co. Sligo VEC is a community of learners with an historic and unique tradition as a provider of education and training. In responding to the needs of the community it delivers the highest standards of teaching and learning.

Co. Sligo VEC schools and centres of Education are democratic, co-educational and multi-denominational in character where policies, practices and attitudes are underpinned by the core values of Respect, Equity and Fairness.

The Board of Management of Corran College is publishing this document as the official Social Media policy. The VEC as patron of the school has approved this publication. Copies of the policy are available at the school and are furnished to each person who applies to be admitted to the school.

Link to Mission statement

Corran College in conjunction with its education partners is committed to providing an environment where each student is cherished equally and is nurtured to a personal, intellectual and moral maturity.

The Social Media Policy helps to set the standards that the school community aspires to; students and staff work together to continue to develop the school and maintain an atmosphere in which all individuals feel safe.

The aim of the Social Media Policy is to ensure that students will benefit from learning opportunities offered by the Schools Internet resources in a safe and effective manner. Internet use and access is considered a school resource. It is envisaged that school representatives will revise the SMP annually.

Rationale

There can be little doubt that we currently live in an information age where the majority of the content (photographs, music, video, print) we consume and create is of a digital nature. The distribution and sharing of such material on the Internet via Social Media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, YouTube, Google+ etc. has become a feature of our times. Young people are now said to be 'digital natives' as the creation and sharing of content comes naturally to them.

Unfortunately there is scope for irresponsible and inappropriate use of Social Media sites and this can lead to bullying, harassment and illegal activity whilst online. We therefore need a policy to ensure the safe & responsible use of Social Media by all members of the Corran College school community. This is necessary in order to protect students, staff and the good name of our school/centre.

Aims

This Policy aims to:

- Produce a set of strategies for students that will allow them to use Social Media safely and responsibly.
- Protect the integrity and good name of all members of the Corran College school community from online abuse.
- Outline behaviours which are unacceptable and the consequences for these.
- Provide guidance for staff on the appropriate use of Social Media.

Policy content

1. Strategies to be taught to students to enable safe & responsible use of Social Media.

Use strict privacy settings.

Review all of the options on your privacy settings page. Many sites default settings tend to keep information public until a user makes it private (although Facebook is a little stricter with minors' accounts). "Friends Only" is a good choice for most items, but you can be even more selective.

Be selective and control what you post.

Be selective about what you share by customizing the recipients of your posts. Activities on Facebook, including the applications teens use and games they play, can be viewed by others. Remember: Everything online happens in front of a vast, invisible, and often anonymous audience. Once something is out there, it doesn't go away as it can be copied and forwarded easily and quickly. Everything leaves a digital footprint.

As a rule of thumb if you wouldn't be comfortable posting something (pictures comments etc.) on a noticeboard in the school corridor then don't post it online.

You should never post personal details such as your phone number, email address or home address.

Remember that irresponsible online behaviour can damage your real life reputation.

Be selective with friends.

Be careful who you make friends with online. In general it is better to restrict friends to people you know and trust in the real world.

Pre-approve tags.

Choose the settings that allow you to see everything you've been tagged in (including photos) before the tag links to your page.

Use notification settings.

You can tell Facebook that you want to be notified of any activity performed on your name, including photo tags.

Never post your location.

Facebook lets users post their location on every post. Teens should not do this for safety and privacy reasons. Teens can also "tag" their friends' location but you can prevent anyone from tagging your location in the How Tags Work section.

If something has been posted that upsets you – tell someone.

If someone is bullying you online, you should:

- As in all cases of repeated unwanted aggression you should tell your Class Tutor, Year Head, the Deputy Principal or Principal or any Teacher in the school.
- Keep and save any bullying emails or images you have been sent.
- Take a screenshot of any comments that are threatening.
- Make a note of the time and date that messages or images were sent, along with any details you have about the sender.
- Not reply to any bullying messages or get into any online arguments.

Using Social Media on your Mobile Phone.

If your profile is linked to your mobile phone, you should use the website's privacy settings to ensure that your phone number is not visible.

Chat & VOIP services. (These allow for communication that may be typed or spoken with or without webcam access)

When using the above you should only communicate with people you trust and remember that other people may be able to view all aspects of the communication.

Watch the clock.

Social media sites can be real time wasters. Hours and hours can go by online - time that should be spent doing homework, studying, reading or exercising.

Appendix A contains links to some online resources that may be useful in dealing with the above subject in class.

Appendix B contains information on reporting inappropriate use on the Facebook site.

2.   Unacceptable uses of Social Media sites and their consequences.

Unacceptable use of Social Media sites will include:

- Sending or posting discriminatory, harassing, or threatening messages or images that may cause harm to any member of the school community.
- Forwarding or 'Liking' material that is likely to cause offence or hurt to a third party.
- Sending or posting messages or material that could damage the School's image or reputation.
- Creating a fake profile that impersonates any another member of the school community.
- Sending or posting material that is confidential to the School.
- Uses that violates copyright law, fail to observe licensing agreements or infringe on others intellectual property rights.
- Participating in the viewing or exchange of inappropriate images or obscene material.

While all cases involving the inappropriate use of social media will be dealt with on an individual basis, the school and its Board of Management considers the above to be serious breaches of our Code of Behaviour. Disciplinary consequences up to and including expulsion may be exercised in certain cases.

Please see the school's Code of Behaviour for information on the full range of sanctions the school employs and our appeal procedures.

3.   Guidelines for staff on the use of Social Media sites.

Personal use of Social Media:

Use of these sites by staff in school is governed by Co. Sligo VEC. I.T Policy and the recently published 'Draft Code of Professional Conduct' from the Teaching Council. *(See Appendix C).*   Staff should not use their personal profiles to conduct school business or communicate with Students or their Parents.

Educational use by staff:

Social Media sites can offer educational opportunities for collaboration on projects, presentation of ideas and sharing of class materials and resources. Staff should be guided by the following principles when incorporating Social Media into their teaching.

- The starting point for all Social Media interaction should be via a link in your Subject Department section on the school's website.
- The educational advantage of the use of the Social Media site in question should be clear and permission sought from the school Principal before use.
- Material that is confidential in nature such as student names, grades etc. should never be posted.
- 'Groups' should be used when collaborating on Facebook. Membership of these can be strictly controlled and users do not have to be friends of other users or the group's creator.
- Pay strict attention to intellectual property and copyright laws.
- All students participating in the online collaboration should be advised of their responsibility to use the site appropriately as per sections 1 & 2 above.
- Staff are expected to exercise sound judgement and maintain the highest professional standards while using Social Media in the school.

More information on how Facebook may be incorporated safely into the classroom and the creation of groups is contained in Appendix D.

Roles and responsibilities

1. The Board of Management will approve the policy and ensure its development and evaluation.
2. The Principal and Deputy Principal will be responsible for the dissemination of the policy and the application of consequences.
3. The Principal, HSCL Teacher and the relevant Year Head will organise for the provision of a Parents Information Evening on Internet safety. This presentation should be organised in conjunction with Feeder Primary Schools and take place every two Years.
4. Class Tutors will be alert to the signs and possibilities of Bullying within their groups.
5. Strategies to ensure online safety will be taught as part of the SPHE anti-bullying programme.
6. Subject Teachers will report any incidents of online bullying and be mindful of their obligations under Child protection Guidelines.
7. The Guidance Counsellor and Care Team will provide support for students who have been victims on online bullying.
8. Subject Teachers will adhere to the guidelines outlined in Section 3 of the policy above.

Review and evaluation

The effectiveness of this policy will be monitored by the Principal and Deputy Principal.

The policy will be reviewed annually or as needs dictate during the academic year.

Appendix A

Follow the links below for resources to assist in educating students on the responsible use of the Internet and Social Media.

http://www.makeitsecure.org/en/young-users.html

http://www.make-it-safe.net/

http://www.webwise.ie/

http://www.facebook.com/safety/groups/teens/

http://www.internetsafety.ie/website/ois/oisweb.nsf/page/safety-en

www.watchyourspace.ie

www.thinkb4uclick.ie

www.safekids.com

Appendix B

Procedure for Alerting Facebook in the case of Bullying or the posting of inappropriate images.

The link below can be used to report the above to Facebook who generally take such reports seriously and quickly remove the offensive material.

http://www.facebook.com/help/?page=178608028874393&ref=bc

Procedure for Reporting a Fake Profile on Facebook.

The first piece of action to be taken by a person, in respect of whom a fake profile on Facebook has been set up, is to contact the Facebook Help Centre immediately and require Facebook to remove the fake profile. This can be done using the link to the Help Centre below. Facebook state that the profile will be removed within 24 hours from notification.

http://www.facebook.com/help/?faq=167722253287296

Procedure for having inappropriate or offensive clips removed from YouTube

YouTube may be alerted to inappropriate uses by selecting the 'Flag' option beside the clip. YouTube will then ask you to select one of six reasons why the video is inappropriate: Sexual Content; Violent or Repulsive Content; Hateful or Abusive Content; Harmful Dangerous Acts; Infringement of Personal Rights; Spam. Once you have indicated the reason YouTube will review the clip within 48 hours and delete it if necessary

Appendix C

Guidelines for staff on Personal use of Social Media websites

From the Teaching Council Code of Conduct

Teachers shall…

3.3.6 Communicate effectively with pupils/students, colleagues, parents, school management and others in a manner that is professional, collaborative and supportive, and based on trust and respect.

3.3.7 Ensure that any communication with pupils/students, colleagues, parents, school management and others is appropriate, including communication via electronic media, such as e-mail, texting and social networking sites.

3.3.8 Ensure that they do not access, download or otherwise have in their possession while engaged in school activities, inappropriate materials/images in electronic or other format.

3.3.9 Ensure that they do not access, download or otherwise have in their possession, at any time or in any place, illegal materials/images in electronic or other format.