INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF CAPE TOWN

Student Social Media Policy

Maintenance

Policy owner	Kascha Reed
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If you have questions about how to interpret this policy, please email hr@isct.co.za or the Policy Owner - As above

1. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

1.1 The International School of Cape Town (**the School**") recognises that social media is a valuable tool for both communication and education purposes. We want all our students to benefit from the opportunities it offers. However, if not used responsibly, social media poses certain risks.

1.2 The School respects the rights of all students to freedom of expression but at the same time, has an obligation to protect its staff, parents, students, its image and its confidential information from any potential risks.

1.3 With this in mind, this Policy regulates your participation on social media, by providing guidelines as to what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable use of these platforms. The purpose of this Policy is to ensure that your use of social media does not compromise the reputation of the School and its stakeholders.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to all students at the School and to social media used in both a personal capacity as well as in relation to/association with the School.

3. DEFINITIONS

"**School**" refers to The International School of Cape Town**.**

"**Social media**" refers to any facility that enables conversations electronically and digitally over the internet including messaging platforms, blogs, forums, applications and platforms such as Facebook, Google Classroom, Instagram, Snapchat, , Tik Tok, WhatsApp, YouTube, Discord, X (Twitter), Gaming platforms (including games on Xbox and PlayStation etc) and any other forms of digital communication now or in the future classified or generally regarded as social media.

"**Adult**" refers to a parent, teacher, staff member and/or guardian.

"**Student**" means any full-time or part time student enrolled at the School.

4. IMPORTANT SOCIAL MEDIA PRINCIPLES

The following are important principles that students must keep in mind when using social media:

4.1 **Students at the School can be linked to the School, even if they do not list the School as their own school anywhere online**. For example, a student's friends on social media could be mainly pupils of the School or a student could be tagged in photos of a School event. **This means that this social media policy and other applicable policies, apply 24 hours a day, 7 days a week**

(including School holidays), as all individuals associated with the School serve as representatives of the School at all times.

4.2 **"Digital content is dangerous content"** – as soon as content exists in a digital format (i.e. as a photo, or typed note), it is at risk of being distributed and seen by many other people. Even if content is not posted online, phones can be stolen, images are backed up to the Cloud (which may get hacked) and screenshots can be taken. As a result of this, all digital content is vulnerable. Content that is sent to someone or posted is especially vulnerable as it is out of the creator's control.

4.3 **Content on social media is "published" content** – as soon as one other person has seen your content on social media (and WhatsApp is a form of social media), in the eyes of the law, that content is regarded as "published" content. This means that you are as responsible for it as the journalist who puts the headline on the front page of the newspaper.

4.4 **It is a permanent record** - everything you put online is there to stay. Even if the content is deleted shortly after it is posted online, screenshots mean that your content can be distributed to people who you would not want to receive it.

4.5 **You are never anonymous online** - even if you use social media under a fake account it is easy to trace the identity and location of an account holder using an IP address.

4.6 **It is not private** - there really is no such thing as "private" on social media. Be very careful with posting any personal information that you would not want the public to see. Be particularly mindful of sharing information such as full dates of birth and current locations.

4.7 **Chain of publication** - remember that even if you did not create the content, in terms of South African law, **you could be held responsible for any content that you retweet, share, like or are tagged in on social media, once you become aware of it and if you have the ability to dissociate yourself from that content, for example, by untagging yourself. Any comments appearing on your posts are also your responsibility**. If you are in a WhatsApp Group, you could potentially also be responsible for content on that group posted by other people (not just the content you posted yourself), if you do not dissociate yourself from that content by either leaving the group or voicing your objection.

4.8 **Don't complain about the School on social media** – if you are unhappy at any time about any matter related to the School, it is your responsibility to raise your concerns **through the appropriate channels**. Turning to social media to air your concerns around the School is not appropriate and is in breach of this policy.

4.9 **If you post something bad about someone or about the School but don't mention the name, it doesn't mean you will not get in trouble for that post** – If you are saying something bad about someone or about the School, you do not have to mention a person or organisation by name for the purposes of the offence of defamation or *crimen injuria* (infringement of dignity). If it is possible to "guess" who you are referring to, you are as guilty/liable, as if you had mentioned the name.

4.10 **Context and tone** - be aware of the tone of your online communication and remember that what means one thing to you, could have a totally different meaning to someone else. Context is often unclear online. Emoticons can sometimes clarify context and tone but can sometimes cause offence or confusion, so use them wisely.

4.11 **You have the right to freedom of expression, but you cannot infringe on other people's rights unfairly** – for example, someone else's right to a good reputation, dignity or privacy. Before you post something on social media, think about the impact that it could have on your fellow students, their parents, the School and the general public. If in doubt, either give it some time and reconsider it at a later stage, or simply don't post it. A good way to consider whether to publish content is to think about how you would feel if this was published on the front page of a national newspaper.

5. APPROPRIATE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

To ensure you use social media appropriately, you are expected adhere to the following practises of good digital citizenship:

5.1 You must abide by all of the terms and conditions for the social media platforms and facilities that you are using.

5.2 Do not give or post your name, date of birth, address, telephone number, or the name, address or telephone number of the School or your parents/guardians, to anyone online.

5.3 Be sure to deactivate location tags for all social media applications so that your location is not made available to everyone (except tracking apps such as Life360).

5.4 Do not take, send or post ANY photos of your family, friends or classmates to others, unless you have their consent.

5.5 Do not say unkind or untrue things about people or use inappropriate language online.

5.6 If you have posted a photo of someone else or content which concerns someone else, and that person asks you to remove it, you must remove it immediately.

5.7 Do not distribute chain mail and/or fake news. Use available resources to find out if something is true or not.

5.8 Do not message, phone, "add" or meet anyone that you have not met face-to-face in real life unless an adult says it is okay.

5.9 Often, people online pretend to be someone they're not. Even if you have an overlap in friends, or your friends introduce you to someone online, always be careful in establishing that they are who they say they are.

5.10 **Immediately tell an adult if:**

5.10.1 You receive suspicious phone calls or messages from people you don't know;

5.10.2 You receive harassing, threatening, disturbing, offensive, illegal or inappropriate content;

5.10.3 You receive any content or if you are part of any conversation (even if you started it) which makes you feel uncomfortable, unsafe, nervous or unsettled.

5.10.4 If someone sends you any inappropriate or pornographic material. In such an instance you must not show it or send it to your friends, as this could be a criminal offence.

5.10.5 If someone is using your image to cause you harm – such as creating stickers or memes of you.

5.10.6 If someone has used AI tools to cause you harm – such as creating deep fakes.

5.10.7 If someone asks you to send them any pornographic material or naked pictures. In such an instance **you must always refuse to send the photographs**, as this could be a criminal offence, or could be used to cause you harm or blackmail you.

5.10.8 If someone is trying to blackmail or extort you.

5.10.9 If you see other people doing things or saying things to other people online that you know they are not supposed to do or say.

5.11 Do not get into arguments or fights online or on social media. If someone tries to start an argument or fight with you, do not answer him or her and tell an adult.

5.12 Do not bully, shame, threaten or harass anyone or send threatening or hurtful messages to others online or on social media.

5.13 Never pretend to be someone else online or on social media or create a fake account.

5.14 Never give your passwords to anyone but your parents/guardian. Have two-factor authentication on every account;

5.15 Never use somebody else's phone or log into somebody else's account, even if you have their permission.

5.16 Do not use something that you found online, on social media or created using AI tools such as ChatGPT and pretend that it is yours.

5.17 Do not download, buy or order anything online or through social media without asking an adult first.

5.18   Do not open any suspicious links or attachments.

5.19   You cannot use the School logo, unless you have **written permission** from the Principal to do so.

5.20   You may not create social media accounts that appear to belong to the School, without written permission from the Principal.

6.   GUIDELINES FOR CLASS WHATSAPP (AND OTHER CHAT) GROUPS

The School recognises that many students are part of WhatsApp groups (as well as other chat groups) which have been established by students for the purpose of providing a communication channel to discuss School-related matters ("the "**Group/s**"). The following guidelines are to be followed when engaging in any communication on the Groups.

6.1   **School business only -** All content on the **class WhatsApp (and other chat) groups** must relate to School-related issues only. There must be no unrelated memes, jokes or social issues discussed on the class WhatsApp (and other chat) Groups.

6.2   **Deliberately excluding or removing students from the Groups** – The Groups may not be used to deliberately exclude or alienate anyone that you may not like, either for fun or to hurt them. Continuing to participate in Groups that do this can make you accomplice to that behaviour.

6.3   **Distance yourself from inappropriate content –** If you are in a Group where other people are doing or saying inappropriate, hurtful or offensive things, you should take a stand against the inappropriate content by either leaving the group, or letting others know that what they are doing isn't right. You should also inform a teacher about such inappropriate content.

6.4   If you are the **administrator** of the Group, you have the ability to delete any content sent on the Group which makes you legally responsible for content that remains on the group.

6.5   **Only reply if necessary** - If a message does not require a response, please do not respond. The volume of messages on these groups can be overwhelming. You do not need to acknowledge receipt unless specifically asked to do so**.**

6.6   **Long conversations, especially if only involving a few members of the Group, are to be taken off the Group**.

6.7   **Don't abuse emojis**. There are some like this 😂 or 😭 that don't require explanation, but others like this 😬 that can be interpreted in different ways and generate confusion. Use with caution as emojis can be legally binding.

6.8   **Respect staff boundaries -** Do not follow school staff on any social media or engage in any communication with them on instant messaging platforms or social media. There is to be no Whatsapp (or other chat or instant messaging)

communication between staff and students unless through a designated official school channel.

6.9 Before sharing any content, especially in Group environments, ask yourself:
- Is it necessary?

- Is it appropriate for the audience?

- Is it now a good time?