



## INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF CAPE TOWN

### PARENTS SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

#### Maintenance

Policy owner	Name
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#### Version Control

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Version #1	June 2025 - SLT approved

Due to the changing nature of employment legislation and for reasons of best practice, policies and procedures may change. All policies and procedures are version controlled and the most up to date versions are all available on the Shared Drive under ISCT Policies Folder. If you have any queries, please contact [hr@isct.co.za](mailto:hr@isct.co.za)

If you have questions about how to interpret this policy, please email [hr@isct.co.za](mailto:hr@isct.co.za) or the Policy Owner - As above



## 1. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

- 1.1 **International School of Cape Town** (“the School”) recognises that social media is a very valuable tool for both communication and education purposes. However, if not used responsibly, social media poses certain risks.
- 1.2 The School prides itself on having good relations with the parents and respects the rights of all parents to freedom of expression, but at the same time has an obligation to protect its employees, 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, or compromise your child in any way.

## 2. SCOPE

This policy applies to all parents/guardians of 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

“**Parents**” refers to parents, step parents and guardians;

“**School**” refers to the **International School of Cape Town**

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

## 4. APPROPRIATE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

- 4.1 This policy must be read in conjunction with the Parent Code of Conduct, which requires *inter alia* that parents:
- Treat the staff members of the School with respect at all times
  - Conduct themselves courteously at on school premises, at sports fixtures and school events
  - Refrain from making disparaging remarks about staff members, students, other parents, referees, judges or players
  - Maintain a courteous and constructive relationship with staff members
- 4.2 Moreover, the School's Enrolment Contract and Parent Code of Conduct, provides that a student may be removed or suspended from the School if the Principal believes that the Parents' behaviour will affect the progress or



well-being of the Student or another child (or other children) and/or Staff Members and/or to **bring the School into disrepute**. This behaviour specifically includes content on social media (and behaviour in the real world which is captured and distributed on social media).

- 4.3 To optimise the responsible use of social media, the School encourages and expects that its parents/guardians use social media in adherence with the following appropriate and acceptable practises governing such use:
- 4.3.1 You must abide by all of the terms and conditions for the social media platforms and facilities that you are using.
  - 4.3.2 Do **not** create, post, associate yourself with or send-on any content that is **detrimental to the School**, or any of its staff, students or parents.
  - 4.3.3 **Do not air your grievances 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 pursue the matter **through the appropriate channels**. Turning to social media to vent/air your concerns around the School is not appropriate and is in breach of this policy.
  - 4.3.4 Do not disclose **private information** about the School, our students or our staff, including but not limited to personal contact information and addresses of students and parents at the School;
  - 4.3.5 You may only take and post pictures, video recordings, voice recordings or other recordings of students, other parents or staff, **if you have permission to do so**. If you have previously taken and/or posted a picture, video recording, voice recording or other recording of another individual and they ask that you delete/remove it, you must do so immediately (unless it contains evidence of wrongdoing).
  - 4.3.6 Should you become aware of any incidences of bullying, harassment, sexting or other inappropriate communications concerning or involving any student or other individual associated with our School, this needs to be reported to a School's Designated Safeguarding Leads immediately.
  - 4.3.7 You may not speak on behalf of the School unless you have been given specific permission to do so.
  - 4.3.8 You must only use the School logo, if you have **written permission** from the Principal to do so.
  - 4.3.9 You may not create accounts that appear to belong to the School, without written permission from the Principal.

## 5. IMPORTANT SOCIAL MEDIA PRINCIPLES

The following are important principles that parents/guardians must keep in mind when using social media:



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- 5.1 **Parents can be linked with the School, even if they do not list the School as the school that their child attends anywhere online.**
  - 5.2 **“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, and content that is sent to someone else, or posted, is especially vulnerable, and is essentially out of the creator’s control.
  - 5.3 **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.
  - 5.4 **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 facilitate widespread distribution of content that is beyond your own control.
  - 5.5 **You are never anonymous online** - even if you use social media under a pseudonym, it is easy to trace the identity and location of an account holder using an IP address.
  - 5.6 **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.
  - 5.7 **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.
  - 5.8 **Failure to mention the name of the School/ person does not remove liability for content that is damaging to the School/ others** - You do not have to mention a name in order to have identified someone for the purposes of the offence of defamation or *crimen injuria* (infringement of dignity). Similarly, you do not have to mention the name of the School for the content to be defamatory. If it is possible to “guess” who you are referring to, you are as guilty/liable, as if you had mentioned the name.
  - 5.9 **Context and tone** - be mindful of the tone of your online communication and remember that context is often unclear online. Emoticons can sometimes clarify



context and tone but can sometimes cause offence or confusion, so use them wisely.

- 5.10 **You have the right to freedom of expression but that right may not unjustifiably infringe on the rights of others** – 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 the School, its parents, its students 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.

## 6. GUIDELINES FOR SCHOOL WHATSAPP GROUPS

The School recognises that many parents/ guardians are part of WhatsApp groups which have been established for the sole purpose of providing a communication channel to discuss School-related matters. This includes both official School groups managed by the PTA and Class Representatives of the School and those started by parents/guardians for the purpose of discussing school-related matters (the "Groups"). The following guidelines are to be followed when engaging in any communication on the Groups.

- 6.1 Class representatives are to **'register'** the relevant Class WhatsApp group with the PTA and class teacher by sharing details of the link and the contact details of the group administrator. Ensure that the aims and the school guidelines are expressed to each member that joins. ([Guidelines can be found on the Class Rep Role Description](#))
- 6.2 **No "out of hours" use of the Groups** - Communications on the Groups must only be sent between the hours of 6am and 9pm save for cases of extreme emergency.
- 6.3 **School business only** - All content must relate to School-related issues only. There must be no unrelated business, current affairs or social issues discussed on the Groups. Advertising, political endorsements, and other non-related topics are prohibited on this group, unless otherwise approved in advance by the Group administrator.
- 6.4 **Positive content only** - The Groups are not the appropriate forum for discussions around gripes or concerns with the School, its teachers, pupils or other parents. If there is an issue of concern, it must be raised through the appropriate channels, and not on social media.
- 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 **Cultivate responsibility** - Please do not use the Groups to routinely find out about homework assignments or tests. We want our students to foster responsibility for their own learning and to develop their own organisational skills. Reliance on the Groups can hinder development of these essential skills.



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- 6.7 **Long conversations, especially if only involving a few members of the Group, are to be taken off the Group.**
- 6.8 **Respect staff boundaries** - our staff are available to help answer questions but this communication should be done by email during office hours. Please understand that it is the policy of the school for staff not to be part of Whatsapp groups unless they have joined as a parent.
- 6.9 **The content shared on these Groups is for the members of these Groups only and shall not be shared with any third party.** These chats are confidential and are solely for the intended addressees. Disclosure, copying (e.g. by screenshot) or distribution of these chats to unintended recipients is prohibited.
- 6.10 **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.
- 6.11 **Do not reprimand or inappropriately address other participants** on a WhatsApp group – speak to the individual directly, following the correct protocols and procedures.
- 6.12 Avoid all messages promoting any form of **hate speech, racism, sexism, discrimination**
- 6.13 Do not send any content that is **violent or pornographic** in nature.
- 6.14 **Don't use groups to send inappropriate and non-school related** memes, videos, pictures, news, advertisements etc.
- 6.15 **Avoid controversial** topics such as politics, religion etc.
- 6.16 When replying to a specific comment from a person, use the **“reply” function** to make sense of your comment and avoid confusion.
- 6.17 Before sharing any content, especially in Group environments:
- Is it necessary?
  - Is it appropriate for the audience?
  - Is it now a good time?
- 6.18 **Practise good digital hygiene on any device on which the Groups are used** - The Groups are often used to discuss confidential information. Any member of a Group must take the following measures to ensure that this content remains secure:
- Ensure that all devices on which the Groups are accessed are password-protected; and
  - Periodically delete content on the request of the Group administrator.

**Please note that in extreme circumstances, a student may be suspended or expelled from the School based solely on the behavioural transgressions of his/her parents. This is not a principle that is unique to our School, but one which has been upheld by South African case law.**