SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

PURPOSE

Teachers, students and parents are increasingly using digital technologies for professional purposes (teaching and learning) and personal purposes (communicating, creating and socialising). Today, with the internet, mobile phones and social media, discussions between individuals can reach a far wider audience than ever before.

Ripponlea Primary School (RPS) and the Department of Education and Training (DET) has policies and procedures governing the use of social media for staff and students. As part of the RPS community, parents/carers also have a responsibility to engage appropriately with Social Media that is linked to the school.

SCOPE

This policy applies to RPS parents/carers as their children's first role model when it comes to online behaviour and the safe and respectful use of social media.

POLICY

Social media can provide an enjoyable way to socialise online and keep you connected with what is going on in your school community. While these technologies can be great for sharing ideas and keeping in touch, comments about your school community can have greater impact than expected and can have very real consequences for the reputations of individuals including teachers, principals, other parents, students and yourself.

There are also legal implications around what people are able post and share about others. Victorian privacy law is complex yet essentially determines that posting or sharing personal information about another person online requires consent.

The following advice is adapted from Department of Education and Training (2015) *Advice Sheet: Social Media and Your School*.

Top tips for positive and respectful online communication with your school community

Avoid posting negative comments that identify your school or individuals.

Feedback from the school community is important for schools and the DET. If you have a concern, it is essential to follow the school's Parent Complaints policy and to be familiar with DET feedback processes: https://www.education.vic.gov.au/parents/going-to-school/Pages/school-complaints.aspx

It is important to remember that serious instances of inappropriate online behaviour may constitute a criminal offence and become a police matter. School staff may obtain personal legal advice if they feel that online content seriously impacts their reputation.

Try not to be emotive or hasty. Keep comments calm and polite.

Before you post something online about your child's school ask yourself questions such as: 'Am I being a good role model for my child?'; 'Does the school community really need to know this

Our vision is for the children of Ripponlea to be global and creative thinkers who are empowered with the skills and empathy to engage with an ever-changing world. They *care*, they *create*, they *connect*.

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information?'; 'Is this information relevant, helpful and positive?'; 'Am I making the situation worse?' If things do get heated online consider logging out and taking time to relax.

Be aware of what you are sharing and with whom

There are legal implications around sharing personal information which apply to images and video presented online. Just as you have the right to choose who sees your child's personal information (including their image), you also have a responsibility to not share the personal details of others. If you upload photos on social media of school events, be aware of who is in the background. Some parents and caregivers do not want themselves or their children on social media.

It is recommended that you never tag a child's image with any personal information. If your child's personal information or image has been shared on social media without your consent you can request its removal by the social network hosting it. All Victorian Government schools have a policy on if and when it is appropriate to use cameras for filming or photographing school events. You can contact your child's school for more information.

Get to know social media. Be proactive and address inappropriate behaviour.

It can be helpful to research online networks and mobile applications. In particular, look at: terms of use; policies and procedures for the removal of content; privacy settings.

If you see something you feel should be removed, flag it. Some sites will allow you to do this anonymously. Most websites and applications have a 'report/block this person' or 'report/block this content' function. If you view something that is of serious concern, you can contact the eSafety Commission: https://www.esafety.gov.au/.

SCHOOL-RELATED DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS

RPS has official modes of digital communication with families which are outlined in its *Home-School Communication* policy.

Parent class representatives are given written guidelines in their roles including advice to use email as a means of digitally communicating with other families in their child's class in order to:

- promote and encourage the attendance and participation of class families at school events
- manage class rosters for certain events (e.g. Snack Shack) and class excursions
- welcome new families to the school
- assist teachers with communicating with class families if needed.

Parent class representatives who wish to create a class-based or year-level messaging group (e.g., *What's App* or similar) must seek the approval of the school before proceeding. The parent/carer seeking approval must accept the full responsibilities of moderating this group in accordance with the behaviours described in this policy as well as:

- RPS Statement of Values
- Schools' privacy policy
- Photographing, Filming & Recording Students policy

Further to the above, the group's moderator must ensure that:

- group membership is strictly reserved for parents/carers and that each has given their consent;
- security settings are set to highest level and groups are 'closed';

- all member names are clearly identifiable through real names (a corresponding initial to denote a surname is sufficient if coupled with a given name);
- references to the names of non-group members should be first name only;
- content of messages adheres to the role and function of the class representative;
- moderation responsibilities are not delegated without the approval of the school;
- content is made available to the school upon request;
- inappropriate content is addressed and reported to the school.

The school reserves the right to rescind approval given to a parent class representative to form and moderate a school-based messaging group.

CONCERNS ABOUT THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Feedback and concerns about the use of school-related social media, including any social media that references the school and its community members, can be reported to the school office administration team, Assistant Principal or Principal.

Where appropriate, concerns will be examined by the School Council which may:

- communicate in writing to the person(s) responsible, providing an outline of the social media-based behaviours that have caused concern and advise on positive, restorative actions – such as referring to the procedures set out in the Parent Complaints policy;
- refer the matter to a relevant authority such as the eSafety Commissioner.

REFERENCES:

- Department of Education and Training (2015) *Advice Sheet: Social Media and Your School*
- Department of Education and Training Using social media: Guide for employees
- Department of Education and Training Feedback about schools
- eSafety Commission: https://www.esafety.gov.au/

RELATED POLICIES:

- Home-School Communication Policy
- Parent Complaints Policy
- Photographing, Filming and Recording Students Policy
- RPS Statement of Values
- Schools' Privacy Policy
- Facebook Workplace Acceptable use Policy https://www.facebook.com/legal/FB_Work_AUP
- WhatsApp terms of service https://www.whatsapp.com/legal/terms-of-service
- Instagram Community Guidelines https://help.instagram.com/477434105621119?helpref=page_content

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