Toowoomba Christian College

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

WHOLE SCHOOL

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 PREAMBLE

As a relatively new communications medium, social media can offer many benefits to the School, clients, employees and other stakeholders. However, without clear guidelines there is also the risk of harm being caused to the School's operation and reputation as well as the school community.

Social media such as Twitter, Facebook, Google+, YouTube and blogging represent a growing form of communication for organisations and the wider community including staff, students and parents, allowing them to communicate with the wider public more easily than ever before.

However, social media is also an area in which rules and boundaries are constantly being tested.

All communication in the public arena about the school, its staff and students should support the overall values and aims of Toowoomba Christian College.

TCC expects all members of the school community to aspire to and live by the Christian virtues of forgiveness, kindness and seeking to unite, not destroy.

TCC expects that Christ's standards for solving issues of disagreement or misunderstanding as outlined in the Sermon on the Mount and other key passages will be embraced and followed by its community.

2 PURPOSE

Toowoomba Christian College accepts that the use of social media is commonly used by members of the Toowoomba Christian College community to express their views, comments, ideas and criticism (unfortunately) on a whole range of issues.

This policy applies to Board members and staff, as well as volunteers. It also applies to students and parents/carers.

This policy should also be read in conjunction with the School's Reputation policy.

This policy has been developed to protect the School's students, staff, assets and reputation through clear protocols for use of social media in official and personal capacities. It outlines the actions the school will take when these protocols are violated. In addition, the policy is in place to set standards for social media use which are consistent with the broader values, mission, aims and expectations of the School's community.

Due to the fast-moving nature of social media and the constant development of new social media programs, it is important that this policy and its procedures be reviewed and updated where needed at regular intervals.

3 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

When members of the school community use social media, they must recognise:

- Online behaviour should at all times demonstrate respect for the dignity of each person
- The need to behave in an ethical manner when using social media (even for personal communication) as those communications can reflect on their role at the School and must be consistent with the school's expectations and standards
- Their responsibility to serve as a positive role model for students
- Social media activities may be visible to current, past or prospective staff, students and parents.

4   COVERAGE

The policy covers two key aspects of social media use:

a.   The official use of social media tools by the School to communicate and interact with the School and wider community in regard to news and events at the School; and

b.   The use of social media by staff, students and parents in relation to School matters.

5   DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this policy, social media refers to all social networking sites, services and tools used for creating, publishing, sharing and discussing information. It includes, but is not limited to:

- Social networking sites: Facebook, MySpace, Google+, Foursquare, LinkedIn, Bebo and Friendster;
- Video and photo sharing websites: Content Communities such as Flickr, wessabe and YouTube;
- Micro-blogging sites: Twitter, Posterous, Dailybooth;
- Instant Messaging: Skype, SMS
- Geotagging: Foursquare
- Blogs: including corporate blogs and personal blogs or blogs hosted by traditional media publications;
- Podcasts: including corporate podcasts and personal podcasts;
- Forums and discussion boards: e.g. local discussion boards, Whirlpool, Yahoo! Groups or Google Groups;
- Virtual Game Worlds: e.g. World of Warcraft;
- Virtual Social Worlds: e.g. Second Life;
- Online encyclopaedias: e.g. Wikis such as Wikipedia, Geo-wiki, GeoNames and Sidewiki; and
- Any other websites that allow individual users or companies to use simple publishing tools, (together called Social Media).

6   RELEVANT LEGISLATION

The laws that apply in the 'real world' also apply in cyberspace.

While the law has not entirely caught up with technology and there is no one specific piece of legislation that regulates social media sites and the use of social media, it is important to keep in mind that what people do with social media, can have real world legal consequences.

Examples of Acts that may be associated with the use of social media:

- Fair Work Act 2009
- Privacy Act 1988
- Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Act 1979
- Telecommunications Act 1997 (Note: the Cybercrime Legislation Amendment Bill 2011- still being debated in the Senate)
- Criminal Code Amendment (Cyber Predators) Act 2006
- Copyright Act, 1968
- Copyright Amendment (Digital Agenda) Act 2000
- Copyright Amendment (Moral Rights) Act 2000
- School Education Act 1999
- School Education Regulations 2000

Recent decisions by Fair Work Australia have again confirmed that proof of excessive use or the inappropriate use of social media during, or outside of work hours, may constitute a valid reason for termination of employment.

7   SOCIAL MEDIA RISKS

The following are some of the major risks associated with the use of social media:

- Reputational damage to organisations and people
- Disclosure of confidential information and breach of privacy laws
- Posting of offensive, bullying, harassing and discriminatory material
- Misuse of intellectual property and breach of copyright laws
- Breaching professional standards

8   OFFICIAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON BEHALF OF TCC

Only employees authorised by the Principal may create social media identities, profiles or accounts that use the School's name, crest or brand, or are designed to represent the School in any way.

Only authorised employees may officially represent Toowoomba Christian College, and only in authorised social media platforms, as outlined in this policy.

Employees authorised to use the School's official social media platforms must:
- maintain the same high standards of conduct and behaviour online as would be expected in a physical work environment.
- behave impartially and professionally.
- behave with respect and courtesy, and without harassment.
- deal appropriately with information, recognising that some information needs to remain confidential.
- be sensitive to the diversity of colleagues, peers, students and the community;
- take reasonable steps to avoid conflicts of interest or perceptions thereof;
- uphold the values of Toowoomba Christian College.
- protect the integrity and reputation of Toowoomba Christian College, its students, school parents and staff.
- comply with applicable laws and legislation, including copyright, intellectual property, privacy, financial disclosure, defamation and other such applicable laws.
- protect the privacy and security of Toowoomba Christian College, its employees, students, parents, partners and suppliers.
- assist and support the achievement of the School's strategic objectives.
- not knowingly provide incorrect, defamatory or misleading information about the School's own work, the work of other organisations, or individuals.

Staff and students posting comments on official School communications should observe the standards of conduct and behaviour above. Toowoomba Christian College reserves the right to delete official posts or comments that are deemed to be defamatory or offensive.

Authorised employees using social media in an official capacity are given autonomy to represent Toowoomba Christian College's views in an ongoing conversation with the public, parents and students. However, there are occasions when content must be reviewed by Senior Management. This includes, but is not limited to, content that is:
- politically sensitive
- associated with a project or activity deemed to be high risk
- a response to an individual or group that is deemed to be high risk, or
- directly quoting another staff member (e.g. a response attributed to the Principal).

Information published via social media is a public record and a corporate record for recordkeeping purposes.

9   RESPONSIBILITIES OF STAFF, STUDENTS AND PARENTS

Staff, students and parents using social media in a personal capacity must take due care to ensure that any comments, opinions, photographs or contributions made online are their own, as private citizens, and cannot be interpreted as an official statement or position of Toowoomba Christian College.

Staff, students and parents are expected to maintain the same high standards of conduct and behaviour online as would be expected in a physical/work environment.

The reputation of Toowoomba Christian College is to be safeguarded by all those connected to the School (employees, contractors, parents and students). Criminal behaviour online will be reported to the Police.

9.1   SENIOR MANAGEMENT

Senior Management are to:

- develop and implement educational programs for students and where appropriate, parents to cultivate ethical digital citizenship.
- investigate any reports of online bullying or inappropriate postings and to implement sanctions commensurate with the scale of the incident.
- ensure that filtering systems are maintained that help ensure websites and emails viewed on School computers are appropriate for children.
- report all breaches of this Policy to the Principal (or delegate).
- ensure this policy is understood by staff for whom they have a supervisory responsibility.
- monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of this policy on a regular basis.

9.2   Staff

How you conduct yourself online is very important. Your posts on your social media should be professional, honest, open, mindful of others, and positive at all times.

Do not discuss colleagues, students or the private matters of parents or express an opinion that could negatively impact on your reputation, the reputation of others and/or the school. Avoid escalating heated discussions, be respectful to others and only quote factual information. Never contribute to a discussion when you are angry or upset.

Should the school's reputation be brought into disrepute, or another member of the school community be defamed by a comment or post you have made, the school may be forced to take action which could potentially result in your employment being terminated. You could also be the subject of civil law suits or criminal charges depending on the nature and the severity of your posts.

- Staff are responsible for using online media in accordance with criminal law, copyright law, the IT Acceptable Use Policy
- Staff and student online interaction must only occur for the purposes of learning. Staff must not accept students as friends on Facebook or similar social media sites nor are they to set up private groups with students. Staff are advised to use professional discretion and prudence before accepting ex-students or parents of current students as friends.
- The use of online learning communities by employees for educational purposes must be in accordance with other relevant school policies and procedures relating to online learning.
- Staff, students and parents must behave ethically when interacting online and will be held accountable for their actions inside and outside of school hours where their actions have a negative impact on the well-being of students and staff and the reputation of the School.
- Social networking sites such as Facebook or similar must not be used as learning tools for students.
- Online activities should not interfere with the job performance of any employee.
- Staff members must not post photos or information via their personal social media accounts that have been obtained because of the privilege of their position at the School.

- It is not permitted to use the School's logo or create school branded accounts which could be interpreted as representing the School unless permission has been granted by the Principal.
- Staff must regularly review profile and privacy settings of their own personal social media sites to prevent inadvertent disclosure of their personal information to members of the School community. Staff are encouraged to use the highest privacy settings of all sites accessed. At a minimum, teachers should have full privacy settings set to "only friends".
- Staff are required to report to their supervisors instances of current students trying to befriend them through social media sites as a measure of disclosing contact. This step is to protect teachers against allegations of grooming of minors.
- Staff should consider the impact of any social media content on their own career or that of their colleagues (eg: "liking" a questionable page).
- School email addresses are not to be shown on social media sites.
- Confidential information about any member of the School community must not be disclosed.
- Staff should be mindful of improper associations that could damage the reputation of the School.
- Information/materials that may cause disrepute or embarrassment for employees or the employer, students or their families must not be posted online.
- Caution must be used when installing external applications that work with social networking sites e.g. calendar programs and games.
- Students' privacy when posting online must be respected. Express permission must be obtained from the parents and the School before any postings are made that include faces or images of students.
- Staff must not discuss or share workplace documents online (e.g. Google Docs, Scribd, Facebook, Twitter) with non-School staff, whether confidential or not.

Staff are advised that social media conversations may also be covered within School policies pertaining to privacy, defamation and intellectual property.

Staff need to be aware of the concept of leaving a "digital footprint", i.e. communication via social media and email is virtually indelible.

Staff who create a social media account to promote and/or sell a product (for example: to sell their artwork or to promote their upcoming gigs) who wish to allow students to follow must:
- Alert their Head of Section to this account,
- Ensure that this account is separate from any personal social media accounts they may have,
- Ensure that this account is a public, not private, account,
- Ensure that the images used and information shared are not of a private nature, are related to the product being promoted or sold,
- Only engage in conversations related to the product with students via the social media account,
- Remember that, first and foremost, they are an employee of the College, and are not to bring the College into disrepute.

9.3 Students

Students are:

- responsible for using online media in accordance with criminal law, copyright law, the IT Acceptable Use Policy and Students' Behaviour & Performance Expectations.
- exhorted not to share their personal information with those who have not earned their trust or have met face to face.
- to respect the dignity and privacy of other members of the School community and are not to use social media for:
  - o posting, viewing or distributing pornography, including sexting;
  - o online harassment or bullying;
  - o outing;
  - o exclusion;
  - o slander/defamation;
  - o cyber stalking; or
  - o masquerading.
- to report any incident involving the points listed above. Incidents can be reported to Head of Primary, Head of Secondary or the Principal.
- consider the impact of any social media content on their own career or that of their friends.
- not to use their school email address for social media sites.
- not to falsify their age in order to sign up for social media sites used for educational purposes that have age limits.
- not to record personal details on public sites used for educational purposes.
- not to share their School user name or passwords with anyone.
- to comply with copyright regulations. Students are advised to read the copyright agreements of online providers.
- not post material that would cause disrepute or embarrassment for staff of Toowoomba Christian College, other students or their families.

9.4 Parents

All parents are invited to join staff in setting a good example for our students by:

- Demonstrating courtesy and respect for staff, other parents and students when comments are placed on social networking sites.
- Using appropriate language when discussing school.
- Addressing any issues or concerns regarding school, directly with the Principal or member of staff.

Examples of not being a good role model include:

- Using social networking sites to make derogatory comments or posting photographs which could bring staff into disrepute, including making comments about students, parents, other staff members, the school leadership, local authority or the wider community.
- Posting photographs of other people's children on social networking sites without their permission.

Parents are responsible for using online media in accordance with criminal law, copyright law, the IT Acceptable Use Policy.

Should the school's reputation be brought into disrepute, or another member of the school community be defamed by a comment or post you have made, the school may be forced to take action which could potentially result in your child's enrolment being terminated. You could also potentially face civil law suits or criminal charges depending on the nature and the severity of your posts.

10   **PARENTAL USE**

Parents are responsible to:
- use online communications with other members of the Toowoomba Christian College community lawfully and respectfully.
- not, under any circumstances, make disrespectful or offensive comments about staff, students, parents or the school in general.
- not comment upon nor forward unsupported information e.g. rumours concerning the school or comment or post material that might otherwise cause damage to the school's or a staff member's reputation or bring it into disrepute.
- be mindful that, by posing your comments and having online conversations etc. on social media sites you are broadcasting to the world. Even with the strictest privacy settings be aware that comments expressed via social networking pages under the impression of a 'private conversation' may still end up being shared into a more public domain, even with privacy settings on maximum.
- never discuss sensitive school matters with other parents using Facebook, blogs and other social media outlets. When posting, even on the strictest privacy settings, parents should act on the assumption that all postings are in the public domain.
- not post material that would cause disrepute or embarrassment for staff of Toowoomba Christian College, students or their families. Parents should understand that publishing defamatory comments about Toowoomba Christian College staff is illegal.

11   **STUDENTS' USE**

Parents are responsible to:
- monitor the online activities of their children when they are not at school.
- be familiar with this policy and ensure that their children understand and comply with this policy.

12   **EXAMPLES OF NOT BEING A GOOD ROLE MODEL**
- Using social networking sites to make derogatory comments or posting photographs which could bring staff into disrepute, including making comments about students, parents, other staff members, the school leadership, local authority or the wider community.
- Posting photographs of other people's children on social networking sites without their permission.

13   **BREACH OF POLICY**

Toowoomba Christian College employees, students and parents who use social media in their own time using their own resources should note that their private comments posted publicly could potentially have repercussions at work. Such instances will be reviewed on a case by case basis with consideration to the possible damage to the reputation of Toowoomba Christian College.

Parents who breach this policy may also in appropriate cases be asked to withdraw their child from the School.

Non-compliance with this policy by an employee may be grounds for disciplinary action, which could lead to termination of employment, depending on the severity of the breach. Such instances will be investigated in line with fair process.

Non-compliance with this policy by a student may be grounds for disciplinary action or expulsion, depending on the severity of the breach. Such instances will be investigated in line with fair process.

Unacceptable use of social media may be a breach of enrolment, employment or contractual obligations, misconduct, sexual harassment, discrimination or some other contravention of law.

Failure to comply with the policy by a parent may, in serious cases, put at risk the continuation of their child's enrolment at the school. In serious cases, termination of the enrolment contractual agreement by the school may result.

Any breach of this policy by staff will be considered by the Principal or delegate, and will be dealt with on a case by case basis.

For any criminal breach of this policy, the Police will be called to investigate.

14 CONSEQUENCES

If there are serious breaches, non-compliance of or with this policy or unacceptable use of social media, the following actions may occur as determined by the Principal:

- Removal of staff from Toowoomba Christian College
- Removal of student/s from Toowoomba Christian College
- Suspension of volunteer involvement
- Severing relations with businesses acting as agencies for Toowoomba Christian College
- Legal action may occur if required