

## USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to create a shared responsibility for use of social media among all individuals in the Torrens Valley Christian School community. Online behaviour should at all times demonstrate a Christ-Centred respect for every individual and for the wider school community, ultimately representing the body of Christ and how Christ would want us to relate to one another.

Torrens Valley Christian School aims to encourage positive and educational uses of social media and to actively address any negative online behaviours. This policy refers to anything posted online where information is shared or published and might affect TVCS staff, students, and the wider TVCS community.

### Social Media

Social media offers a platform for people to share information by creating and consuming content. There are many benefits to social media and the potential to allow people to learn and connect with each other through various shared interests. Examples of social media include:

- Social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn, Myspace, et al)
- Video and photo sharing websites (e.g. Flickr, YouTube, et al)
- Snapchat (video messaging)
- Blogs, including corporate blogs and personal blogs Micro-blogs (e.g. Twitter)
- Forums, discussion boards and groups (e.g. Google groups, Whirlpool Wikis (e.g. Wikipedia)
- Vod and podcasts
- Video conferences and web conferences
- Email and instant messaging
- All other emerging electronic/digital communication applications
- Twitter

In this dynamic, connected world of communication and learning, schools need to ensure that opportunities to utilise technologies do not place people at risk. While many of these risks are new and educators need to be familiar with strategies and processes that maximise learning opportunities and outcomes, while minimising the risk to safety and wellbeing.

### Rights and Responsibilities

There are collective obligations for all staff, students, and the wider Torrens Valley Christian School community in the use of social media.

Feeling safe and supported at school is essential for student wellbeing and effective learning. TVCS respects the right for all members of the school community to feel safe and be safe at school and also to feel safe in the online environment. A proactive approach is taken in accepting responsibility for developing and sustaining a safe and supportive learning and teaching environment that fulfils the school's child protection responsibilities.

### Protocols for official use of Social media by TVCS community members

Social media may be used to positively promote and encourage Torrens Valley Christian School and its members. For example promoting events, clubs and activities, school events.

While there is great potential for the use of social media within the school community, a number of potential risks are associated with the use of social media, such as:

- reputational damage to the organisation and its community;
- 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; and
- staff breaches of the Professional Code of Conduct.

**The following protocols apply to the use of social media:**

At all times TVCS community users of social media should:

- show respect to individuals within the school community and to the reputation of the school
- be sensitive to the School's Christian values when posting or sharing content
- be inclusive of others in the community to which they have a right to belong
- represent their own views and not impersonate or falsely represent to be another person – a clear distinction should be made between their own views, and not necessarily being the views held by others at Torrens Valley Christian School as appropriate
- avoid posting content which is bullying, intimidating, abusive, a form of harassment, and defamatory in nature
- use inoffensive, appropriate language
- respect the rights and confidentiality of others
- ensure all content posted on social media is in line with all Torrens Valley Christian School Policies and core values
- ensure content (including images) posted online containing information about someone other than self has consent from that person
- ensures all content is lawful, including adherence to copyright laws
- safe-guard the reputation of staff, students and others involved in the life of Torrens Valley Christian School
- ensure confidential or sensitive information is not posted
- remember the rule that 'once it's out there, it can't be taken back'. If a person is in doubt about whether content should be posted, it is best to leave it out.
- act to remove and or direct to the School leadership / welfare team to any inappropriate postings by others which affect community members and or the School's reputation.

**Cyber Bullying**

Cyber Bullying is viewed by Torrens Valley Christian School like any other form of Bullying behavior. Under no circumstances should offensive comments or content be published about any TVCS staff, students, volunteers or people that are part of the TVCS community. TVCS will not tolerate any use of social media that is negative, destructive or harmful to individuals or groups. A breach of this policy could result in disciplinary action by Torrens Valley Christian School for staff and students. It could also involve further action if TVCS chooses to proceed.

**Staff**

Staff have a number of areas to consider in the personal and professional use of social media, including a duty of care for students and for their colleagues. Staff of TVCS are expected to model respectful and responsible conduct to students and the wider community. Staff must remember that content posted online can reach an unintended audience.

The following guidelines in the use of social media at all times forms part of TVCS employment conditions:

- ensure that use of social media does not impact upon your job including the use of mobile devices at work
- information obtained through work, this includes sensitive information about a student, for example: a medical condition or family circumstances, is kept confidential
- refrain from posting any information or photos of a sensitive nature involving TVCS or its staff, students and wider community; for example accidents or incidents.
- educate students on using social media to: Respect others and themselves when posting any content, to keep personal information private and to report any inappropriate content directed at them
- use discretion and considered thought before accepting students / past scholars, school parents as 'friends' on their own social network sites or interact with students on social networking sites (Friends refers to a request to link personal social network accounts together to share information).
- students or co-workers must not be discussed, or school policies publicly criticised school policies
- staff must not post images that include students on social networking sites – unless they have permission on a School approved site
- staff should be aware that any welfare concerns should be reported promptly to the appropriate bodies.
- social media sites must not be set up for school events without prior approval

### **Students**

Education and communication with students around the appropriate use of social media should be ongoing. Clear guidelines should be given to each student, so there is understanding of expectations and informed decisions can be made. These guidelines should be strictly adhered to as part of their enrolment at Torrens Valley Christian School. Guidelines:

- Respect others and yourself when posting any content
- Take a Christ-Centred approach to all activity and involvement online
- Do not post or publish any content that reflects negatively on the reputation of TVCS in the community
- Keep personal information private
- Report any inappropriate content directed at you or others to a teacher or to a deputy principal where appropriate

### **Parents**

Parents and Carers also have a shared responsibility to ensure that their use of social media does not in any way compromise Torrens Valley Christian School's reputation in the community. Any content posted should reflect the school's Christian values. Discretion should be used when posting any content that involves a person in the school community.

### **Monitoring usage**

TVCS reserves the right to monitor for any purpose all communications and access usage via the School's IT network. All communications, information or materials delivered via such resources must be transmitted, stored and accessed in a manner that safeguards appropriate confidentiality.

### **Misuse of social media**

The following is regarded by Torrens Valley Christian School as serious and appropriate action where serious offences have been committed. Where there is reasonable belief that illegal activity has occurred, TVCS is required to take further action, which may include:

- Termination of employment for staff
- Cancellation of enrolment for students

Serious offences include:

- A breach of employment obligations
- Serious misconduct
- Sexual harassment
- Unlawful discrimination
- A criminal offence
- A threat to the security of Department ICT resources
- An infringement of the privacy of staff and other persons such as students or parents, or
- Exposure to legal liability.

**Definitions:**

**Defamation:** If an employee publishes information that identifies a person; and the published content lowers the person's standing, brings that person into hatred, ridicule or contempt, or causes others to shun or avoid that person; the employee who published the information may find themselves personally defending an action of defamation.

**Copyright**

**Copyright:** Is the legal protection of literary, dramatic, artistic, and musical works, sound recordings and performances. It provides creators with the legal right to control the use of their creations. Publishing such works without the requisite permissions from the creator(s) may amount to a breach of the *Copyright Act 1968*.

**Related Policies**

- Management of Bullying & Harassment

**Further Information**

- [www.decd.sa.gov.au/docs/documents/1/DecdSocialMedia.pdf](http://www.decd.sa.gov.au/docs/documents/1/DecdSocialMedia.pdf)
- [bullyingnoway.com.au](http://bullyingnoway.com.au)
- [cybersmart.gov.au](http://cybersmart.gov.au)

**Evaluation**

This policy is to be reviewed as part of an annual review cycle.

**Document Information**

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