

Social Media Policy

Vermont Primary School and Vermont Kindergarten

RATIONAL

In this growing age of social media we wish to define the bounds of appropriate online behaviour for teachers. The most popular social networks are web-based, commercial, and not purposely designed for educational use. They include, but are not limited to, sites like Facebook, Twitter and Snapchat.

As educators we have a professional image to uphold and how we conduct ourselves online helps determine this image. In line with the Child Safety Standards, staff must not engage in inappropriate dialogue about their school and/or students or post pictures and videos of themselves engaged in inappropriate activity for public viewing.

IMPLEMENTATION

One of the hallmarks of social networks is the ability to “friend” others – creating a group of others that share interests and personal news. Vermont Primary School and Vermont Kindergarten staff are not to accept invitations to *friend* students within these social networking sites. When students gain access into a teacher’s network of friends and acquaintances and are able to view personal photos, the student-teacher dynamic is altered. *Friending* students provides more information than one should share in an educational setting. It is important to maintain a professional relationship with students to avoid relationships that could cause bias in the classroom.

For the protection of your professional reputation, Vermont Primary School and Vermont Kindergarten recommends the following practices:

Friends (Students)

- Do not accept students as friends on personal social networking sites. Decline any student-initiated friend requests.
- Do not initiate friendships with students.
- Remember that people classified as “friends” have the ability to download and share your information with others.
- If you wish to use networking protocols as a part of the educational process, please work with your executive team and Kindergarten Director to identify and use a restricted, school-endorsed networking platform. See “Social Media Guide” DET online module <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/bullystoppers/Pages/bullystopmodules.aspx>

Friends (Parents/Families)

- Do not accept parents/families of Vermont Primary School or Vermont Kindergarten as friends on personal social networking sites. Decline any parent-initiated friend requests.
- If you have a friendship with a family that was not formed on a professional basis through the school then please ensure you abide by the below mentioned.

Content

- Do not discuss students or coworkers or publicly criticise school polices or personnel.

- Always follow relevant Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Policies including the *Code of Conduct* that can be found at <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/management/lol/guides/sm/code.htm>
- Do not use commentary deemed to be defamatory, obscene, proprietary, or libelous. Exercise caution with regards to exaggeration, colorful language, guesswork, obscenity, copyrighted materials, legal conclusions, and derogatory remarks or characterisations.
- Do not place posts which put your effectiveness as a teacher at risk.
- Post only what you want the world to see. Imagine your students, their parents, your administrator, visiting your site. It is not like posting something to your website or blog and then realising that a story or photo should be taken down. On a social networking site, once you post something it may be available, even after it is removed from the site.
- Images/photos that are uploaded to any social networking sites by a teacher must not contain any students in them.

Security

- Visit your profile's security and privacy settings. At a minimum, educators should have all privacy settings set to "only friends".
- "Friends of friends" and "Networks and Friends" open your content to a large group of unknown people. Your privacy and that of your family may be at risk. People you do not know may be looking at you, your work, your students, your home, your kids, your grandkids, - your lives!

Please stay informed and cautious in the use of all new networking technologies.

This policy works in conjunction with:

The Child Safety Standards
 Child Safety Policy
 eSmart Policy
 Working with Children Checks Policy
 Mandatory Reporting Policy
 Engagement and Wellbeing Policy

EVALUATION

This policy will be reviewed by the school in accordance with DET guidelines on a 4 year cycle.