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## Use of Social Media: Facebook and Code of Conduct Policy

### Overview

This policy sets expectations for Department of Education and Early Childhood Development employees, contractors and volunteers who engage with social media on a private, professional, and official basis. It is the Department's policy to use social media where appropriate to support Victorians to build prosperous, socially engaged, happy and healthy lives.

### Definition

Social media is the term used for internet based tools for sharing information and ideas. It refers to user-generated information, opinion and other content shared and discussed over open digital networks. Social media includes, but is not limited to:

- Social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn)
- Micro-blogging (e.g. Twitter) and instant messaging (e.g. Lync)
- Video and photo sharing websites (e.g. YouTube, Instagram)
- Blogs, wikis, forums, discussion boards and groups
- Vod and podcasting
- Geospatial tagging (e.g. Foursquare).

### Rationale

This policy and code of conduct has been created to guide the implementation of the Facebook site for Cobram Primary School. The purpose of the Facebook page is to ensure that with the platforms of Compass and Seesaw, they serve the role in strengthening the school community and enhance the wellbeing and connectedness of all community members in a positive and united way. The policy has been developed to define appropriate terms of use by parents and staff.

The Facebook page is a public, promotional and celebratory 'real time' platform:

- Photos of events, excursions, activities
- Achievements
- Awards and acknowledgements
- Updates

### Intention

The intention of this policy is to establish a culture of openness, trust and accountability for departmental social media activities.

1. To ensure that DET and legislative requirements in relation to social networking and in particular, Facebook, are adhered to and that all users and moderators of the Cobram Primary School page are aware of these policies.
2. That all Facebook users and moderators are aware of appropriate usage guidelines and steps that will be taken to deal with inappropriate use.
3. To mitigate the risk of civil or criminal legal action and damage to Cobram Primary School reputation.
4. To ensure the smooth and successful running of the Cobram Primary School Facebook page and to promote Cobram Primary School as a best practice model of technological innovation and wider school community engagement.
5. This policy applies to the private, professional, classroom, and official use of social media by employees of the Department, Victorian Government school councils, departmental statutory authorities, contractors and volunteers, in schools, regions, and central offices.

## Guidelines

### Interacting

- Users will be able to comment on the school's postings and on comments by other users. Users will be able to 'like' a post or comment by clicking on the like button.
- Users will not be able to author a posting of their own or load media such as photos or videos unless they have administrative rights
- Administrators will include Cobram staff as appointed by the Principal and Assistant Principal and will be reviewed annually.
- Our Page will serve as a platform for the exchange of information, its programs and activities.
- Compass will complement the Facebook Page and will be used for emergencies, reminders and daily happenings and will contain a Facebook link for ease of use.

### Using of real names in posts

- Student's first names are often used in posts or comments unless otherwise instructed by the families. First name of adults only to be used. We do encourage you, if you wish to acknowledge someone's great work or community contribution. Facebook used in this way will build our community and a pat on the back goes a long way to supporting a positive school environment.
- Cobram does not endorse children under the 13 year old threshold imposed by Facebook to create their own Facebook account. Students should be supervised if viewing our Facebook Page and expect that community conduct on our Facebook Page will serve as a good role model for our students as to how to behave in social media spaces.

### Raising Issues

- Cobram Primary School is happy to be alerted about issues regarding its Facebook Page but does wish to remind the community that some things are best dealt with privately.
- Issues involving any students, staff or other members of the community **MUST NOT** be communicated via Facebook. For the safety and well-being of each student, this includes referring to issues related to students on personal pages.

We will not support any interactions that incite or contribute to overly negative sentiments. We also ask that you do not use the names of any student, staff or community member in any posting in reference to concerns. We reserve the right to block access by anyone who abuses our trust.

#### Moderating and Blocklisting

- Cobram Primary School reserves the right to set the strength level of the profanity filter and to add words and names to the page's blocklist.
- The school reserves the right to ban any user from interacting with its Facebook pages for breaches of the Code of Conduct.
- All posts will be subjected to moderation in accordance with these provisions:

#### Constant criticism and/or derogatory comments:

1. Remove comments
2. Review moderation process
3. Advise user of Code of Conduct
4. Block User
5. Remind all users of Code of Conduct

#### Swearing

1. Remove comments
2. Blocked by profanity filter
3. Advise user of Code of Conduct
4. Block User
5. Remind all users of Code of Conduct

#### Posting Myths, Rumours, Untruths

1. Diplomacy taken – thank user, dispel myth with fact
2. If considered a deliberate untruth advise user of Code of Conduct

#### Parents creating alias'

1. Block unknown users
2. Remind community of code of conduct
3. Continued breaches – take down page and inform community why

#### Page is hacked

1. Remove comments
2. Remove page temporarily

#### Students or Individual named in reference to a concern or negative issue

1. Remove comment
2. Advise user of Code of Conduct as well as Defamation Act (users need to be aware of potential legal consequences if a person is defamed)
3. Block user
4. Remind all users of Code of Conduct

#### Students name or adult surname used accidentally

1. Remove name from post
- Terms and Support documentation

The Law and Facebook's Terms of Cobram's Primary School page operates under the Commonwealth Telecommunications Act and Facebook's Terms and Conditions. Additionally, the Facebook Page is subjected to the Victorian Government/ Department's workplace occupational health and safety guidelines including provisions relating to bullying and discriminatory behaviour. Please also refer to further information and support documentation below.

#### Implementation

A copy of this policy is to be made available through the Cobram Primary School and attached to the Facebook Page.

- All parents and community members who 'like', the Cobram Primary School Page accept the terms and conditions of this policy and code of conduct.

## Types of use

The lines between work and personal life can become blurred for people working in the public sector since obligations under existing legislation and codes of conduct extend beyond the hours of work.

Private use refers to social media activity undertaken as a private citizen, normally using a profile linked to a personal email address. When making a comment in a private capacity, people covered by this policy must ensure that their comments are not perceived to be an official comment and do not compromise their capacity to perform their public sector role.

Professional use covers those activities and comments made on social media platforms for a professional purpose. For instance, a school based activity on Facebook to support information sharing across the school community. Typically the school's Facebook page would be linked to the school's Edumail account.

Official use refers specifically to those activities undertaken by central and regional staff and others covered by this policy authorised to make comment made on behalf of the Department. These comments would typically be made via public-facing departmental social media sites such as the official twitter account, @deecd.

Official use does not include comments made by employees of government schools on behalf of their school.

## Supportive Documentation

### 1. Creating Respectful and Safe Communities

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/parents/behaviour/Pages/safecommunities.aspx>

### 2. Child Safe Standards: Creating a safe environment

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/health/childprotection/Pages/safeenviro.aspx>

### 3. DET : Acceptable use policy, Communications and Technology (ICT) Resources

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/principals/infrastructure/ictacceptableusepolicy.pdf>

### 4. Alannah and Madeline Foundation : eSmart <https://www.esmart.org.au/what-is-esmart/>

### 5. DET : Responding to incidents : Step by Step guides

Removing inappropriate content from a website, Facebook or other social media site Department employees to access legal and wellbeing support for online incidents of concern

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/bullystoppers/Pages/teachrespond.aspx>

### 6. The Victorian Teaching Profession Code of Conduct

[https://www.vit.vic.edu.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0018/35604/Code-of-Conduct-2016.pdf](https://www.vit.vic.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0018/35604/Code-of-Conduct-2016.pdf)

7. Commissioner for Privacy and Data Protection

[https://www.cdp.vic.gov.au/images/content/pdf/privacy\\_info/20170220\\_CDPD\\_Social\\_Media\\_Privacy\\_FAQs.pdf](https://www.cdp.vic.gov.au/images/content/pdf/privacy_info/20170220_CDPD_Social_Media_Privacy_FAQs.pdf)

8. Facebook : Statement of Rights and Responsibilities <https://www.facebook.com/legal/terms>

## Relevant Legislation

1. Public Administrations Act 2004 [http://www6.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/viewdb/au/legis/vic/consol\\_act/paa2004230/](http://www6.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/viewdb/au/legis/vic/consol_act/paa2004230/)

2. Education and Training Reform Act 2006  
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/departement/legislation/Pages/act2006.aspx>

3. Information Privacy Act 2000

## Policy Standards

The following standards apply to all employees and other people covered by this policy<sup>1</sup> in their private, professional, and official use of social media:

1. DEECD employees, contractors and volunteers must maintain public trust and not bring the Department or the Victorian Government into disrepute
2. DEECD employees, contractors and volunteers must be perceived as unbiased and apolitical in line with the Code of Conduct for Victorian public sector employees
3. DEECD employees, contractors and volunteers must only make public comment on behalf of the Department when specifically authorised to do so
4. DEECD employees, contractors and volunteers are encouraged to share information with colleagues and the public, but must also protect private and confidential information obtained through their work
5. DEECD employees, contractors and volunteers must be inclusive, respectful, and uphold the CORE values of the Department

## Expectations

Under Ministerial Order 199, members of the teaching service are expected to maintain a civil, courteous, and professional relationship with students, members of the community, and their colleagues within the Department. Staff must not act in any manner unbecoming of their position, whether during or outside the hours of duty, and must not behave in a way that would impair the school or the Department's standing in the community. This policy does not supersede or replace existing obligations, legal responsibilities, and policies in effect.

<sup>1</sup> Public sector employees include central and regional staff, Victorian government school teachers, support staff, and principals, school council employees, volunteers, and contractors.

Use of social media within learning and development settings All Victorian government schools are required to develop a Student Engagement Policy which articulates the school community's shared expectations in the areas of student engagement, attendance and behaviour. It is recommended that schools include social media considerations into their Policy to outline procedures for their local setting.

Legislative framework Legislation applicable to the use of social media includes:

- Public Administration Act 2004
- Education and Training Reform Act 2006
- Children's Services Act 1996
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006
- Public Records Act 1973
- Information Privacy Act 2000
- Copyright Act 1968
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)
- Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001 (Vic)

Supporting framework

- The Department has produced the resource Using social media: guide for departmental employees in schools to support employees in schools to use social media in a safe, responsible, and professional manner.
- The Department's Bully Stoppers resource provides advice on cybersafety and educating young people to be safe and responsible users of social media tools.
- This Policy supports the Guidance for use of social media in the Victorian Public Sector, published by the Public Sector Standards Commissioner. It is recommended that this guidance be viewed for clarification of existing obligations under the Code of Conduct in relation to social media.
- The Victorian Teaching Profession Code of Conduct identifies a set of principles to guide the professional conduct, personal conduct, and professional competence of registered teachers (refer specifically to Standard 7). The Code is applicable to all interactions with students, colleagues, and families, whether online or in the classroom.

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## **Policy status**

This policy is in draft form until it is due to be reviewed in October 2023.

The date the policy is due for review will be no greater than three years from the date of endorsement. The Executive Director, Governance and Executive Services Division, is responsible for reviewing this policy. Further information Please contact the Information and Knowledge Management Branch (Governance and Executive Services Division) for further information about the policy.