

## Social Media Policy

### Introduction

This Social Media Policy was a collaborative school process, involving teachers, staff, parent representatives, the Principal and the Board of Management in January/February 2020.

### Rationale

Scoil N. an Chroí Ró Naofa recognises that teachers, students and parents engage with social media applications. These applications include, but are not limited to Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, WhatsApp, Blogs, and other online platforms through which people connect and share information.

All members of the Scoil N. an Chroí Ró Naofa community are expected to uphold the values of the school in all social media interactions.

Staff, students and parents/guardian will not act in such a way that the image or reputation of Scoil N. an Chroí Ró Naofa is brought into disrepute nor in a way that harms members of the school community.

Therefore, it is expected that Scoil N. an Chroí Ró Naofa staff, students and parents use social media in a respectful and responsible manner.

Social media should not be used to insult, present offensive or inappropriate content or to misrepresent Scoil N. an Chroí Ró Naofa or any member of the school community.

### Aims

The aim of the Social Media Policy is to set standards of behaviour for the use of social media that are consistent with the values and expectations of Scoil N. an Chroí Ró Naofa. Scoil N. an Chroí Ró Naofa aims to protect the safety and wellbeing of students, teachers and the school community. If, however, there is a breach of Scoil N. an Chroí Ró Naofa's Social Media Policy the school will undertake disciplinary action in accordance with its Code of Behaviour and Key for Discipline.

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Any breach will be dealt with on a case by case basis.

Reports of cyber bullying and other technology misuses will be investigated and may result in a notification to Tusla or An Garda Síochána as appropriate:

*The Anti-Bullying Procedures define bullying as “unwanted negative behaviour, verbal, psychological or physical conducted by an individual or group against another person (or persons) and which is repeated over time”. In the context of the Antibullying Procedures “placing a once-off offensive or hurtful public message, image or statement on a social network site or other public forum where that message, image or statement can be viewed and/or repeated by other people” is also regarded as bullying behaviour. School personnel should be aware of their school’s anti-bullying policy and the procedures to be followed in relation to any alleged bullying incidents. Children First National Guidance 2017 and the Anti-Bullying Procedures provide that in cases of **serious instances of bullying** where the behaviour is regarded as possibly abusive, a referral may need to be made to **Tusla or An Garda Síochána** as appropriate.*

(Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, 2017, p17-18)

### Definitions

Social Media refers to websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking. These tools include, but are not limited to Facebook, Snapchat, Twitter, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, Google+, Instagram, Tik Tok, SMS, YouTube and includes emails and mobile devices.

### Rights and Responsibilities

Staff, students and parents are expected **to show respect** to all members of the school community.

**Staff:** responsible for the inclusion of cyber safety awareness within the curriculum with guidance from relevant education authorities.

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**Parents:** responsible for being aware of and informed about their children's online activity and be proactive in the supervision and guidance of their children, considering this policy and in particular the school's core values.

### STUDENT GUIDELINES

Most social media platforms and messaging and streaming services have a minimum age requirement. The majority of these services require users to be 13 years-old +, while some are set at 16 years-old. Technically, children under the age of 13 should not have a social media account. Scoil N. An Chroí Ró Naofa, therefore, operates under the assumption that no child for any reason should be using social media prior to age 13.

With that being said, we know that some parents/guardians give permission to their underage-children to set up accounts on social networking services and it's easy to get past their age checks. Consequently, when using social media, students are expected to ensure that they:

- Read and agree to the terms and conditions of various social media sites as many of them have age restrictions for their use e.g. Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Tik Tok, Gmail etc. all have age restrictions. The law provides protection around the use of children's personal data for marketing or to create online user profiles or accounts.

Currently, companies must get parental consent before they start to collect or use the data of anyone under the age of thirteen. **In Ireland, this age has been raised to 16 years old.**

- Are aware of what they are posting online, and that social media platforms and applications are public forums.
- Are not permitted to join a staff member's areas on networking sites. If students attempt to do this, the member of staff is to refuse the student access and inform the principal. The student's parents will be informed if this happens.
- Will not access social networking sites during the school day.
- Respect the rights and confidentiality of others.
- Do not impersonate or falsely represent another member of the school community.

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- Do not bully, intimidate abuse, incite harm, harass or threaten other members of the school community.
- Do not make defamatory comments towards other members of the school community.
- Do not use offensive or threatening language or resort to personal abuse towards each other or members of the school community.
- Do not harm the reputation of Scoil N. An Chroí Ró Naofa or those within its community.
- Do not upload video, audio or photographs of any member of the Scoil N. An Chroí Ró Naofa community (student, parents or staff).
- Do not upload any video or photographs of any student where they can be identified as a Scoil N. An Chroí Ró Naofa student by their uniform or any other means.

### PARENT GUIDELINES

Digital tools such as classroom blogs, social media platforms, YouTube, Class Dojo, e-Portfolios open up communication between students, parents and teachers. This kind of communication and collaboration can have a large impact on teaching and learning at Sacred Heart SNS. The school encourages parents to participate in such activities when appropriate but expects that parents act responsibly and respectfully at all times, understanding that their conduct not only reflects on the school community, but will be a model for our students as well.

#### **Parents should:**

- Be aware that many social media sites have **age restrictions** that have implications for their primary aged children. Parents need to monitor their children's online social media activity and read the terms and conditions of various social media sites and applications their children are interested in using. The introduction of the GDPR and the adopting of **16 as the Digital Age of Consent in Ireland** came into effect on **May 25<sup>th</sup> 2018**.

The requirements of the GDPR also state that "Where the child is below the age of 16 years, such processing shall be lawful only if and to the extent that consent is given or authorised by the holder of parental responsibility over the child."

- Be aware that they are in breach of terms and conditions if they set up a personal account for their children to use if they knowingly understand that age restrictions apply.

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- Ultimately, parents/guardians need to decide if their child is equipped to deal with the social pressures that arise from social networking. Many variables should be considered including if the child is ready to handle the pressures, risks, emotions, and unpredictable nature of using social media and to use it responsibly.
- Before uploading photos, audio or video, parents need to **seek appropriate permission** from any individual involved. This most particularly applies in relation to the privacy of the students and staff of Scoil N. An Chroí Ró Naofa.
- Online postings and conversations are not private. Do not share confidential information, internal school discussions, or specific information about students, staff or other parents.
- Be conscious of the fact that expert advice given is that all users of social media sites should do whatever they can to not identify any child by name or associate them with a particular school.
- Parents should not participate in spreading false or unsubstantiated rumours or false information regarding the Scoil N. An Chroí Ró Naofa community and its members.
- Parents assisting with classroom activities should not make use of social media sites while involved in such activities.

### **STAFF AND TEACHER GUIDELINES**

- Staff should only use approved, educational learning platforms in the classroom such as Class Dojo and Edmodo. Social networking sites such as Facebook, Snapchat and Instagram must not be used by staff as a platform for learning activities with students (these sites are blocked by the content filtering on the school's broadband programme).
- Staff should not accept students as 'friends' on their own social network sites or interact with students on social networking sites.
- Staff and student online interaction must occur only in an educational context.
- Staff are advised to NOT accept ex-students or parents of current students as friends on personal social media sites.
- Staff must not discuss students or colleagues or publicly criticise school policies or personnel on social networking sites.
- While staff have permission to post photographs of students to the school website, they do not have permission to post details that would identify any child.

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- Staff are personally responsible for content they publish online. Staff need to be mindful that what they publish will be public for a long time.
- The lines between public and private, personal and professional are blurred in the online world. If staff identify themselves online as affiliated with Scoil N. An Chroí Ró Naofa then they need to be aware that they are representing the entire school community. Staff should ensure that content associated with them is consistent with their work at the school and the school's values and ethos.
- Under the GDPR, photos and videos should only be shared with the consent of each person in the photo/video.
- Staff should not participate in spreading false or unsubstantiated rumours or false information regarding the Scoil N. An Chroí Ró Naofa community and its members.
- When contributing online, staff should not post confidential student information.
- Staff should visit their profile's security and privacy settings on social networking sites. At a minimum, staff should have all privacy settings set to 'only friends.'

(See Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers, 2016, Section 3, for relevant details regarding professional conduct)

### **MANAGING CHANGE AND ISSUES ARISING**

- We acknowledge that technology changes rapidly. If any member of the Scoil N. An Chroí Ró Naofa community has a concern or question pertaining to social media or social networking sites, this should be directed to the Principal, Deputy Principal or the school's Digital Learning Team.
- Parents, students or staff who have a complaint or issues arising from social media should contact the principal.



# Scoil Náisiúnta an Chroí Ró Naofa



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### **Review and Implementation**

The Social Media Policy is available on the school's website: [www.sacredheartsns.net](http://www.sacredheartsns.net)

The Social Media Policy was formally approved by the Board of Management at its meeting on \_\_\_\_\_ . It will be reviewed in February 2023.

Donal Brennan

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Chairperson of the Board of Management