STAFF SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

RATIONALE

The purpose of this policy is to encourage acceptable and beneficial use of social media by staff employed at Plenty Parklands. It is recognised that most employees may use or interact with social media at work and in a personal context.
There is great potential for the use of social media in school communities in terms of educational outcomes and as a means of communication.
However, employees also need to understand the expectations of the school when using social media in a professional and personal capacity as there are also workplace risks that must be appropriately managed.

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, and
- for teachers, breaching the Victorian Teaching Profession Code of Conduct issued by the Victorian Institute of Teaching.

WHAT IS SOCIAL MEDIA?

Social media is any form of online or web-based publication, forum or presence that allows interactive communication, including, but not limited to, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, blogs, forums, discussion boards, chat rooms, Compass, Wikis, Twitter and YouTube.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Employees 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 reflect on their role at the school, and must be consistent with school policies and professional expectations and standards
- their ability to serve as a positive role model for students and as a representative of the school is a critical aspect of their employment, and
- social media activities may be visible to current, past or prospective staff, students and parents.

Employees will avoid the potential of breaching this policy and compromising the professional expectations of them at the school if they do not use personal social media forums to:

- post any material about the school (e.g. students, parents, policies, employees etc.)
- post inappropriate material about themselves
- make inappropriate contact with members of the school community.

This policy should be read and interpreted in conjunction with:

- Using Social Media: Guide for DET Employees in Schools
  http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/bullystoppers/Pages/socialmedia.aspx
- Public Administrations Act 2004 (Vic) and the VPS Code of Conduct made under that Act, which applies to the public sector
  http://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/employcond/pages/conduct.aspx
- Part 2.4 of the Education Training and Reform Act 2006 and any relevant Ministerial Order made under that Act which applies to the teaching service;
- Information Privacy Act 2000
- Guidance for Use of Social Media in the Victorian Public Sector. Available at:
  https://vpsc.vic.gov.au/html-resources/guidance-for-the-use-of-social-media-in-the-victorian-public-sector/
- The Victorian Teaching Profession Code of Conduct. Available at:
  http://www.vit.vic.edu.au/SiteCollectionDocuments/PDF/Code-of-Conduct-June-2008.pdf
- Acceptable Use Policy for the Department's ICT Resources
  https://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/Documents/ICT-acceptable-use-policy.pdf

IMPLEMENTATION

Work-related use of Social Media

Student Learning
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.

Generally
When using social media for work related purposes, employees must:

- first obtain the consent of the Principal or one of the Assistant Principals (which can be for a specific instance or for a general purpose or role) before:
  - posting any material that may be perceived as being made "on behalf" of the School (e.g. any commentary, school information, photographs of the school, students, staff or other identifying images)
  - using the school's logo, trademarks, official photographs or any other intellectual property of proprietary materials
- not post inappropriate material or commentary that breaches other policies outlining expected behaviours of employees at the school.

If there could be reasonable concerns that posting any material could be considered inappropriate (e.g. in light of potential privacy or copyright obligations), then an employee must first raise those concerns with the Principal before posting the material.

Personal use of Social Media

Generally
It is recognised that employees may use social media in their personal life. However, it is also recognised that such use may impact on the employment relationship.
Accordingly, employees' personal use of social media must:

- not bring the school into disrepute or interfere with, or compromise their duties or responsibilities to the school or students
- comply with other policies of the school and professional standards that outline expected behaviours of employees when posting personal comments that relate to, or can be identified as relating to, school issues (e.g. must not discuss or reference employees, students, policies or anything related to, or reflecting upon the school)
- apply appropriate filters, i.e. "only friends"
- take steps to ensure that friends, family or other acquaintances are aware of the need to use discretion when they post images or information about the employee on their own social media forums.

To avoid potentially breaching this policy or compromising the professional expectations of them as employees at the school, it is recommended that employees' use of social media not involve connections with the following persons on social media forums (for example, being "friends" on Facebook):

- former students. Staff not to "friend" any former student until the student has exited the school system
- parents of current students

unless special circumstances exist (e.g. a parent is a personal friend or former student is a relative) and the employee has advised the Principal of the connection and the circumstances.

SECURITY, PRIVACY AND ACCESS

To avoid potentially breaching this policy or compromising the professional expectations of them as employees at the school, it is recommended that employees:

- ensure the privacy settings of their social media profiles are appropriately set to avoid putting their privacy at risk (e.g., minimum recommendation for Facebook accounts: settings set to "only friends" and NOT "Friends of Friends" or "Networks and Friends" as these open your content to a large group of unknown people)
- recognise that even if they implement the maximum security settings for their social media profiles, the security settings on social media forums cannot guarantee that communications placed online do not become more publicly available than was intended (employees should always assume that posts or communications online may become public).

Employees must understand that the type of security settings used cannot excuse breaches of this policy if the material posted is inappropriate and becomes more publicly available than was intended.

CONSEQUENCES OF BREACHING THIS POLICY

Non-compliance with this policy may be grounds for disciplinary action. Depending on the seriousness of the circumstances, disciplinary action can be up to and including termination of employment.

REVIEW CYCLE AND EVALUATION

This policy will be reviewed in line with new laws, regulations and best practice.

This policy was last updated and endorsed by School Council in March 2019.