

# Appropriate Use of Social Media Policy

*Inspiring Great Minds*



Queensland Academy  
for Science Mathematics  
and Technology





## 1. RATIONALE

The purpose of this policy is to set standards and guidelines of behaviour in the use of social media by students at the Queensland Academy for Science, Mathematics and Technology (QASMT) that are consistent with the values and expectations of an Academy student; as one who enacts the IB Learner profile of a caring and upstanding global citizen. This policy also aims to promote positive relationships with all members of the Academy community. It should be read in conjunction with the Student Code of Conduct and the Responsible Use of Mobile Phones and Other Devices Policy.

Social Media can be an effective social and educational tool when used correctly and appropriately. It is expected that students will uphold the expectations of the Academy in all social media exchanges and interactions. Students, whilst enrolled at the Academy, will not act in a way that damages the values and ethos of the Academy by bringing it into disrepute. Students will not use social media to act in a way that causes offence or harm to others. We expect our students to use social media in a respectful, courteous and responsible manner at all times, using appropriate and inoffensive content and language. Social media should not be used to insult, offend or misrepresent the Academy and its values. The internet, mobile phones and social media provide wonderful opportunities for students to network and socialise online. While these technologies provide positive platforms for sharing ideas, they also have the potential to cause pain and suffering to individuals, groups or even whole communities. It is important to remember that sometimes negative comments posted about the school community have a greater impact than expected.

### Definition

**Social Media** means all social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram, SnapChat, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, YouTube, MSN and includes all email and mobile devices. Note that the list is not exhaustive and the Policy is designed to cover all social network sites including those developed in the future.

## 2. SCHOOL COMMUNITY BELIEFS ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF USING SOCIAL MEDIA RESPONSIBLY

It is important that students, staff, parents and caregivers have a shared understanding of the importance of the responsible use of social media at all times and respect the dignity of all members of the community, including members of the Academy community. Students are expected to show respect to the reputation of the Academy in all their dealings with each other and members of the broader community. Students are expected to comply with the lawful requirements of all social networking sites and to accept responsibility for any damage to the Academy's reputation, self or others, as a result of social media misuse.

## 3. RESPONSIBILITIES

### Students should

- Respect the rights and confidentiality of others
- Use social media safely and responsibly at all times



- Encourage parents/caregivers to work in partnership to address this issue
- Use technology responsibly for learning during class times, following all class teacher directions

### **Students should not**

- Bully, intimidate, abuse, harass, threaten or cause harm to others
- Make defamatory comments
- Use offensive, threatening language or personal abuse towards each other or members of the Academy community
- Post content that is considered disrespectful, hateful, threatening, pornographic or incites violence against others
- Impersonate or falsely represent another person
- Harm the reputation of the Academy and those within its community
- Film, photograph or record members of the Academy community without permission
- Share, use or store film, photographs, recordings, screen shots or similar, without permission of members of the community. To do so is in breach of the Invasion of Privacy Act 1971. More details regarding the inappropriate use of technology to record, film and photograph without permission can be found in the Responsible Use of Mobile Phones and Other Devices Policy.

### **Parents and caregivers should**

- Ensure their student follows the school's Responsible Use of Mobile Phones and Other Devices Policy and Appropriate use of Social Media Policy
- Assist the school by monitoring problematic online and social media behaviour by students
- Talk to their students about being a courteous, respectful and safe user of social media

### **Parents and caregivers should not**

- Film, photograph or record members of the Academy community without permission
- Share, store or use film, photographs, recordings or similar without permission of members of the community. To do so is in breach of the Invasion of Privacy Act 1971.

### **QASMT will**

- Inform parents/caregivers of the school's Responsible Use of Mobile Phones and Other Devices Policy and Appropriate use of Social Media Policy;
- Maintain a high level of digital security on the school network
- Explicitly teach students safe and responsible digital and online behaviour
- Monitor student use of digital technology at school and in class
- Ensure that staff adhere and support the Appropriate Use of Social Media Policy.

## 4. TEXT COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Bullying is an ongoing misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behaviour that causes physical and/or psychological harm.

It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power over one or more persons.

*“Bullying can happen in person or online, and it can be obvious (overt) or hidden (covert). Bullying of any form or for any reason can have long-term effects on those involved, including bystanders.*

*Single incidents and conflicts or fights between equals, whether in person or online, are not defined as bullying.”*

*The Alannah and Madeline Foundation: Bullying Hurts*

Reputations of students, teachers, schools, principals and even parents/caregivers can be permanently damaged - and in some cases, serious instances of inappropriate online behaviour are dealt with by police and the court system.

### Parents/Caregivers and students should be aware

- Before you post something online, ask yourself if the community or individual really needs to know. Is it relevant, positive and helpful?
- Remember that what you post online is a direct reflection of who you are. People will potentially form lasting opinions of you based on what you post online.
- Be a good role model. If things get heated online, consider logging out and taking a few moments to relax and think. Hasty, emotive responses could inflame situations unnecessarily.
- Be mindful when commenting, try to keep general and avoid posting anything that could identify individuals.
- A few years ago parents/caregivers may have discussed concerns or issues with their friends at the school gate. Today with the use of social media, online discussions between you and your close friends can very quickly be shared with a much wider audience, potentially far larger than intended.
- Taking a few moments to think about the content you are about to post could save upset, embarrassment, and possible legal action.
- As a parent/caregiver you have a role in supervising and regulating your student's online activities at home and its impact on the reputation and privacy of others. Parents/Caregivers are their child's first teachers - so they will learn online behaviours from you. Is it appropriate to comment or post about schools, staff or students?
- Parental and community feedback is important for schools and the department. If you have a compliment, complaint or enquiry about an issue at school, the best approach is to speak directly to the school about the matter, rather than discussing it in a public forum.

While many schools use social media to update parents/caregivers of school notices, the department prefers that parents/caregivers contact schools directly if they have a compliment, complaint or enquiry due to privacy considerations. Imagine if your doctor, accountant or banking institution tried to contact you to discuss important matters via Facebook.

If you have raised an issue with the Academy, or know that another person has, consider refraining



from discussing those details on social media, particularly the names of anyone involved.

Keep comments calm and polite, just as you would over the telephone or by email. If you encounter negative or derogatory content online, which involves the school, hinders a student's learning and/or affects the school community at large, contact the school principal.

## **5. POSSIBLE CIVIL OR CRIMINAL RAMIFICATIONS OF ONLINE COMMENTARY**

A serious instance of inappropriate online behaviour may constitute a criminal offence and become a police matter. For example, online content may substantiate the offence of 'using a carriage service to menace, harass or cause offence' (Criminal Code Act 1995 (Cth) s. 474.17). School staff may contact their union or obtain personal legal advice if they feel that online content seriously impacts their reputation. Defamatory online content may give rise to litigation under the Defamation Act 2005 (Qld).

### **What about other people's privacy?**

If you upload photos of your student, be mindful of who might be in the background. You might be happy to share your child's successes with your friends and family via social media, but some parents/caregivers are not. If you are tagging or naming students, consider that other parents/caregivers may not want their child's name attached to images online.

### **What if I encounter problem content?**

Taking the following steps may help resolve the issue in a constructive way:

- refrain from responding
- take a screen capture or print a copy of the concerning online content
- if you consider problem content to be explicit, pornographic or exploitative of minors, you should keep a record of the URL of the page containing that content but NOT print or share it. The URL can be provided to the school principal, or the Queensland Police Service, as needed for escalation of serious concerns
- block the offending user
- report the content to the social media provider.

Students are reminded that behaviour that affects other members of the school community whilst enrolled at the Academy, even if it is performed outside of school hours, may be subject to disciplinary action within the school. For further information, see the Preventing and Managing Bullying Policy and the Student Code of Conduct.



## 6. INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR USING SOCIAL MEDIA OUTSIDE SCHOOL HOURS

Whilst enrolled at the Academy, students will receive disciplinary consequences for cyberbullying or misuse of social media resulting in inappropriate behaviour and breach of policy that occurs outside of school hours.

## 7. BREACH OF SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

A breach of the Appropriate Use of Social Media Policy may also involve a breach of other Academy policies and procedures, and should be read in conjunction with the following:

- Student Code of Conduct
- Preventing and Managing Bullying Policy
- Responsible Use of Mobile Phone and Other Devices Policy

A breach of this policy will be considered by the Principal, or Principal's delegate, and will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. Cybersafety is paramount at the Academy and all reports of cyberbullying and other technology misuses will be investigated fully and may result in a notification to the Queensland Police Service where the Academy is obliged to do so. Students and parents/caregivers must be aware that in certain circumstances where a crime has been committed, they may be subject to a criminal investigation by the Queensland Police Service over which the Academy will have no control.

A breach of Policy may result in, but is not limited to:

- the loss of technology privileges
- detention
- suspension or expulsion from the Academy

Devices potentially containing evidence of criminal offences may be reported to the police. In such cases police may take possession of such devices for investigation purposes and students and parents/caregivers will be advised to contact the Queensland Police Service directly.