



Borrisokane Community College



Social Media & Digital Communication Policy



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Borrisokane Community College



Social Media & Digital Communication Policy

1. RATIONALE

Young people now learn, communicate, and socialise in a digital world. Social media and online communication tools provide educational opportunities, but also present risks such as bullying, harassment, privacy breaches, reputational damage, and exposure to harmful or illegal content.

This policy aims to ensure that all members of the school community use social media safely, responsibly, and respectfully. It protects students, staff, and the good name of Borrisokane Community College.

2. ALIGNMENT WITH THE SCHOOL MISSION

Borrisokane Community College is committed to maintaining a caring, respectful, and inclusive learning environment. This policy supports that mission by:

- Promoting positive digital citizenship.
 - Safeguarding student wellbeing.
 - Ensuring responsible participation in today's digital society.
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3. AIMS

The policy aims to:

- Provide clear strategies for the safe, ethical, and responsible use of social media.
 - Protect the privacy, dignity, and reputation of all members of the school community.
 - Outline unacceptable behaviours and their consequences.
 - Give explicit guidance for staff on the professional use of social media.
 - Support students' development of digital literacy, critical thinking, and online safety skills.
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4. POLICY CONTENT

4.1 Safe & Responsible Use of Social Media – Guidelines for Students

General Expectations

- Adhere to the Code of Behaviour and BÍ Cineálta policies online and offline.
- Avoid anonymous or unmoderated platforms.
- Students and parents/guardians must not engage with staff on personal social media accounts.
- Use official school platforms for school-related communication.
- Students will learn about this policy through Mentoring sessions and the SPHE/Wellbeing programme.

Privacy & Security

- Maintain strong, regularly reviewed privacy settings.
- Think carefully before posting; online content can be shared or misused.
- Do not post personal details (address, phone, email).
- Protect passwords and use secure login practices.

Posting Content

- Only share content suitable for a school environment.
- Never share images or videos of others without permission.
- Remember that online activity forms part of your digital footprint.

Friends & Followers

- Accept connections only from people known offline.
- Decline requests from strangers.

Location Sharing

- Disable location-tagging features and avoid posting real-time locations.

If Something Upsets or Concerns You

Students should:

1. Report concerns to a Year Head, Deputy Principal, Principal, or trusted staff member.
2. Keep evidence such as screenshots, dates, times, and usernames.
3. Avoid replying to harmful messages.
4. Block and report inappropriate accounts.

Messaging, Group Chats & Video/Voice Platforms

- Only communicate with trusted people.
- Be aware that screenshots or forwarding can occur.
- Maintain respectful behaviour in group chats.
- Students should not join school-related group chats on any platform.

Mobile Devices

- Ensure personal phone numbers are not publicly visible online.
- Mobile phones must not be used during class, including social media/messaging.
- iPads may not be used in class to communicate with other students without teacher permission.

Healthy Online Habits

- Manage screen time appropriately.
- Avoid excessive use that interferes with sleep, wellbeing, or learning.

4.2 Unacceptable Use of Social Media

Prohibited behaviours:

- Posting, sending, or sharing discriminatory, harassing, or threatening content.
- Creating, liking, or forwarding material intended to hurt or embarrass others.
- Actions damaging the reputation of the school or community members.
- Creating fake or impersonated accounts of students or staff.
- Sharing confidential school information or personal data about others.
- Breaching intellectual property or copyright laws.
- Viewing, creating, or distributing explicit, inappropriate, or harmful material.
- Any behaviour that constitutes bullying under the Anti-Bullying Policy.

Consequences

Serious breaches may result in sanctions up to suspension or expulsion, following the school's Code of Behaviour and national guidelines. Gardaí may be notified where required.

4.3 Guidelines for Staff

Professional Conduct

- Personal social media accounts must not be used to communicate with students or parents.
- Comply with the Teaching Council Code of Professional Conduct, the AUP, Child Protection Procedures, and Anti-Bullying Policy.

- Do not access or store inappropriate or illegal materials.

Educational Use

When social media enhances teaching and learning, staff must:

- Seek Principal approval before using platforms.
- Use school-managed systems (SharePoint, Teams, school-approved apps).
- Never publish student personal data publicly.
- Use closed, private, or moderated groups when appropriate.
- Comply with copyright and licensing requirements.
- Remind students of their responsibilities under this policy.
- Model responsible digital behaviour.

4.4 Use of Cameras, Photos & Video Recording

The use of cameras on digital devices to capture images or record video/audio is strictly prohibited except when:

- Part of authorised classwork.
- Teacher gives explicit permission and supervision.

Prohibited activities include:

- Taking photos/videos without permission.
- Recording in classrooms, corridors, school grounds, transport, changing areas, or school events without approval.
- Posting, forwarding, uploading, or sharing such content online or via messaging apps.

Breaches are treated seriously, with sanctions up to suspension. Gardaí may be notified in cases involving harassment, privacy violations, or inappropriate content.

5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- **Board of Management:** Approves and monitors implementation.
- **Principal & Deputy Principal:** Oversee communication, implementation, and disciplinary procedures.
- **Year Heads:** Reinforce expectations and record incidents.
- **Parents' Association & School Leadership:** Provide parent information evenings on online safety.
- **SPHE/Wellbeing & Mentoring Coordinators:** Teach online safety, digital citizenship, and responsible use.
- **All Teaching Staff:** Report concerns and follow Child Protection Procedures.

- **Guidance Counsellor & Care Team:** Support students affected by online harm.
 - **Programme Coordinators:** Ensure digital content complies with this policy.
 - **All Staff:** Uphold high professional standards online.
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6. REVIEW & EVALUATION

This policy will be reviewed every two years or sooner if required due to changes in technology, legislation, or school needs.

7. SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- **Webwise (Ireland):** www.webwise.ie
- **BeSafeOnline (Gov.ie):** www.gov.ie/besafeonline
- **PDST Technology in Education:** www.pdst.ie/technology
- **ISPCC / Childline:** www.childline.ie
- **Garda Online Safety Information:** www.garda.ie

Platform-specific reporting features (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, YouTube) are available through each app's "Report" or "Help & Safety" sections.
