

# Guidelines on Ethical Use of Social Media



## Commitment to Learners

Teachers have a professional obligation to develop and maintain professional relationships with learners based on the best interests of those learners. A teacher who is both aware of social media and a competent and confident user will be a role model for their learners and encourage them to become good digital citizens.

- Before having one-on-one conversations using social media, **consider ethical risks** that could arise. Act the same way when using social media, as you would in a face to face setting.
- Carefully **consider the tone and content** of your posts or messages when using social media as a teaching tool – think about how it compares to how you present yourself in the physical learning environment.
- When using a social media platform, **consider setting up separate groups** for specific teaching purposes. Keep your private and professional use of social media separate.
- If learners contact you by social media and ask for help or advice relating to sensitive personal issues, **social media isn't the right forum for providing support**. Consider redirecting them to appropriate support structures, such as the Guidance Counsellor or guidance team in their school/centre. **Follow your school or centre's policies** on dealing with information divulged to you as a teacher.
- When using social media for teaching, think about how you will **monitor content** so that posts and discussions remain on-topic. You may want to de-activate the group when the project or unit ends to avoid creating a space where off-topic and un-moderated chat can continue.
- Remember that when you set up an online space such as a group or a blog, you remain the 'owner' or administrator. This means you should **take care when delegating** editing rights to others.

## Commitment to Society

Teachers are entrusted with the care and education of learners. Teachers who model good social media use will grow learners who apply positive, respectful values in their interactions on social media platforms. These skills will equip them for life beyond school in an increasingly digital world.

- Bear in mind that teachers are viewed as **role models** by our wider society, and **think carefully** about how you represent yourself when using social media.
- **User names are linked to you**. Even if you don't use your real name, you can still be identified.
- **Understand and use privacy settings** where available on social networking sites to ensure that your personal information is kept private.
- Share only what you're comfortable with the whole world seeing.
- Be aware that 'friends' or contacts you have on social media platforms can share content that you post and tag you in photos. **Content shared can be persistent** and receive a greater audience than you initially intended.

## Commitment to Parents/Guardians & Family/Whānau

Social media provides a great opportunity to collaborate and communicate with parents and family. Social media can provide a window into a school/centre so that ideas and information can be shared and exchanged all the time.

- **Talk** to parents/guardians about **why and how** you are using social media for your teaching.
- Keep parents/guardians **updated and involved** in what's being shared on blogs and on-line spaces created for teaching and learning.
- Where appropriate, **seek permission** from learners and parents/guardians before sharing information such as student work, learning stories or pictures of learners

## Commitment to the Profession

The profession is a knowledge-building community. As a member of the profession you should seek and respond to opportunities to share knowledge and discuss concerns.

- Engaging in ongoing discussions with colleagues can help when you are unsure whether you should share, reuse or respond to content. **Talking to colleagues about your activity on social media platforms** means you aren't acting in isolation and exposing yourself to a potential ethical dilemma.
- Check whether your learning centre has a policy on social media use and always **act in accordance with that policy**. If there isn't one or the existing policy is outdated, bring it up for review at a staff meeting.
- Be aware that once shared, content posted on social media platforms can be **re-shared** by many.
- **Consider your digital 'footprint'** and the fact that people you don't know may judge you based on how you are portrayed online.
- **Think about how you want to be presented**, both in your own posts/photos/videos and those you are 'tagged' in by other users. Be aware of how it may appear to colleagues, parents/guardians, learners and society in general and consider whether it is consistent with how you want to be viewed as a member of the teaching profession.
- **Up-skill yourself** - many social media platforms have helpful tutorials and guidelines on how to set up groups, establish privacy settings, and how 'friends' or other users are able to share information that you post.
- **Check the terms of use** of each social media platform that you use to make sure you know how the service provider may access, re-use or republish the information you post.
- When posting information created by another author or organisation, you should **clearly acknowledge their ownership and the source** of the information. This is advisable regardless of whether the information is clearly copyrighted in the original source or not.

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