



HKIS Digital Communications and Social Media Policy

Social media is a great way to share positive news and events about HKIS, as well as to communicate factual information about policies and school life with others in our community. This policy aims to encourage the safe use of social media by the school, its staff, co-curricular leaders and coaches, parents, carers, and students; it is especially focused on safeguarding children, minimizing bullying, and protecting the reputation of those in our community. In line with the *HKIS Community Partnership and Communication Guidelines*, all communications on such channels must demonstrate good intent, be constructive, and communicate care, respect for others, and sensitivity for diversity.

What is Social Media?

Social media is a broad term for any kind of online platform which enables people to directly interact with each other. This includes platforms such as: WhatsApp, WeChat, Facebook, Facebook Messenger, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, LinkedIn, Pinterest, YouTube, Flickr, Foursquare, and public forums such as Wikipedia and other blogs.

When to Use Social Media

Parents, teachers, employees, and students (as age appropriate) are encouraged to use social media as a way to build community at the school. It is also a special way to capture and document a child's journey or an educator's teaching practice.

Specific student issues are best discussed privately with school representatives, not on group chats (e.g. WhatsApp, WeChat, Facebook Messenger, mass emails) or public platforms (e.g. closed or public groups or pages on Facebook or Twitter). Similarly, members of our community should not lobby for changes in policy or procedure on these platforms. Please refer to the Sequence of Communication Channels in Parent and Student Handbooks for the appropriate procedures on how to address concerns at the school.

Scope of the Policy

The school respects the privacy of those in our community and knows that many employees and students use social media in their private lives. Communications that may have a negative impact on professional standards or the school's reputation can be damaging to HKIS and our



community and, therefore, are within the scope of this policy. This applies to all members of the community and to **all professional and personal** online communications which directly or indirectly represent the school.

Professional communications are those made through official channels, posted on a school account or using the school name (e.g. classroom or divisional Instagram accounts, divisional or department Twitter accounts) . All professional communications are within the scope of this policy.

In the case that **personal communications** (those made on personal social media accounts or emails) refer to or impact HKIS, it must be made clear that the employee is not communicating on behalf of the school. Such personal communications are within the scope of this policy.

Personal communications which do not refer to or impact HKIS nor violate the employee [Code of Conduct](#) are outside the scope of this policy.

Digital communications with students are also within the scope of this policy. *Employees may use social media to communicate with learners via a school social media account for teaching and learning purposes but must consider age-appropriate use and any potential implications.*

This policy covers:

- Guidelines for Employees (including contracted Co-curricular Employees)
- Guidelines for Students
- Guidelines for Parents and Carers
- Legal Considerations
- Photography Guidelines
- Managing Social Media Accounts



Guidelines for Employees

All communications between a teacher or other adult and a student must be professional in nature and for the purpose of communicating information about student academics, wellbeing, or activities. Adults include teachers, coaches, or any other supervising adult. HKIS has a number of official social media accounts that students and their parents can “friend” or “follow” for information and updates on school-related matters.

Employees must adhere to the following guidelines for social media:

- Do not “Friend” or “Follow” students on social media platforms using a personal social media account. Likewise, employees must not accept a “friend” or “follow” request from students.
- Do not request access to a student’s private posts on his/her social media account.
- Consider the content and profile of your professional or personal account. Be sure that any posts in your account history reflects your position as an educator/professional at the school.
- All communication between a teacher and student must have a record, and therefore, teachers must not engage in non-permanent communication platforms (e.g. Snapchat or Instagram “disappearing video” posts) with students.
- Teachers are encouraged to set their personal accounts to “private” to distinguish between professional and personal profiles when connecting with other adults.
- Employees must not use social media to infringe on the rights and privacy of others.
- Employees should not make ill-considered comments or judgments about colleagues.
- School social media accounts must not be used for personal gain.
- If a journalist makes contact about posts on social media, employees must follow the school media policy before responding.
- The use of social media by employees while at work must be in line with school policies.

As with any communication with a student, electronic communication must not contain or relate to any of the following:

- Drugs or alcohol use.
- Sexually oriented conversation, sexually explicit language, sexual activity, and inappropriate or sexually explicit pictures.
- The adult’s personal life, social activities, relationship or family issues, or personal problems.



- Any communication concerning a student's personal life, social activities, relationships, family issues or personal problems must be professional in manner and, if possible, include another adult in the communication.
- Supervising adults who encounter information on social media platforms regarding the safety or abuse of a student must follow the guidelines in the Employee Code of Conduct as it relates to responsibility of care.

Handling Abuse:

- When acting on behalf of the school, employees must handle offensive comments swiftly and with sensitivity.
- If a conversation turns and becomes offensive or unacceptable, employees managing social media accounts must block, report or delete other users or their comments/posts and should inform the audience exactly why the action was taken. It is useful to take a screenshot of the conversation for your records before taking these actions.
- If you feel that you or someone else is subject to abuse by any community member through use of a social networking site, then this abuse should be reported to the most appropriate school faculty or administrator.

Guidelines for Students

Students should remember that the Internet is permanent and public. They should take care with their activities and identities on social media, including by following the guidelines below:

- Instagram requires everyone to be at least 13 years old before they can create an account (in some jurisdictions, this age limit may be higher).
- All school-related digital communication, including public and private group chats, must not include conversations that would be unacceptable in the classroom.
- Avoid posting offensive or inappropriate language, pictures, videos or comments about your classmates, teachers, or other members of the school community.
- Ensure that content posted on your social media websites does not depict or involve inappropriate or illegal activities.
- Don't post anything you would not say in a public forum when representing HKIS.
- Be selective of whom you befriend on social media. There are many false identities out there.
- Check your privacy settings. We recommend the strongest security settings be used on all platforms where only approved followers can view your content.



- Never post your home address, phone numbers, birth date, or other personal information on social media. Do not include your location on social media posts.
- Understand that anything you post online is available to anyone in the world and out of your control thereafter. The information you post is no longer your property but that of the social media website.
- Students are encouraged to comment or post appropriately about the school. Criticism or suggestions for improvement should be done with positive intent. Any offensive or inappropriate comments will be resolved by the use of the school's behavior policy.
- Anonymous posts are discouraged in relation to school activity.
- If a conversation turns and becomes offensive or unacceptable, students should block, report and/or delete other users or their comments/posts. If possible, it is useful to take a screenshot of the conversation for your records before taking these actions.
- If you feel that you or someone else is subject to abuse by any community member through use of a social networking site, then this abuse should be reported to the most appropriate school faculty or administrator.

Guidelines for Parents and Carers

Parents on campus are some of our most valuable advocates for student learning, and social media is a positive way to share student learning within our community. Below are some reminders and guidelines for sharing content on social media from campus visits.

- Parents volunteering in classrooms should first and foremost be engaged in the classroom activities and their responsibilities on that day.
- If parents capture photos of students, please note that photos of children in the classroom must remain private. If you choose to share a photo on your personal (non-public) social media accounts, please ensure that only your child is identifiable, unless you have the consent of the parents of the children pictured.
- If you have joined a class chat group (e.g. on WhatsApp or WeChat) created with the contact information you've shared with the class, photos of your child engaged in classroom activities (including field trips, group work) may be shared within this group.
- Photos taken on campus must not be shared on any public profiles or media outlets without the consent of the school or individuals in the photos.
- If you feel that you or someone else is subject to abuse by any community member through use of a social networking site, then this abuse should be reported to the most appropriate school faculty or administrator.



Legal Considerations

- Users of social media must consider the copyright of the content they are sharing and, where necessary, should seek permission from the copyright holder before sharing.
- Users must ensure that their use of social media does not infringe upon relevant data protection laws or breach confidentiality.
- Users of social media accounts for school purposes must follow legal age requirements for each platform.

Photography Guidelines

The following guidelines apply to all pictures taken on film or digital camera (including smart phones) and all types of video recording and video streaming.

- All photographers must observe generally accepted standards of decency.
- Employees must exercise their professional judgement about whether an image is appropriate to share on school social media accounts. Students must be appropriately dressed, not be subject to ridicule and must not be on any school list of children whose images must not be published.
- If an employee inadvertently takes a compromising picture which could be misconstrued or misused, he/she must delete it immediately.
- Employees must not, under any circumstances, share or upload student pictures online without the permission of the students or their parents and only on school-managed social media accounts.
- Photos must avoid any personal information such as full name, contact details, or classroom location.
- If photos are taken during a field trip or overseas trip, they must not be shared until after students have returned to school or home. This is to avoid sharing information about a student's location.
- Anyone taking photos must seek permission to use any photos or video recordings on social media. If anyone asks not to be filmed or photographed, his/her wishes must be respected. This applies to individuals and partner organizations (e.g.: during Interim, service trips, PEAK).



- Pictures and video footage taken are for personal use only and not for commercial use.
- Photographs must not be taken in locker-rooms or bathrooms.
- Photos of children in the pool must be above the waist only.
- For the safety and privacy of our students, please be reminded that photos taken on campus must not be shared on any public profiles or media outlets without the consent of the school.

HKIS has a photo policy with regard to the use of images and video footage of students engaged in school-related activities. All parents renew their consent on an annual basis when verifying personal information on PowerSchool. Please contact the Marketing Office for more information.

Managing Social Media Accounts

Roles & Responsibilities:

- Board of Managers
 - Review and approve Social Media Policy.
- Marketing Office
 - Facilitate training and guidance on social media use.
 - Develop and implement the Social Media Policy.
 - Escalate any reported incidents to divisional administration.
 - Make an initial assessment when an incident is reported and involve appropriate staff and external agencies as required.
 - Receive completed applications for social media accounts.
 - Approve account creation.
- Faculty / Staff
 - Create a social media account following approval by the Marketing Office.
 - Store account details, including passwords securely.
 - Be involved in monitoring and contributing to the account.
 - Control the process for managing an account after the lead staff member has left the organization (closing or transferring).
 - Know the contents of the account and ensure that any use of social media on that account is carried out in line with this and other relevant policies.
 - Attend appropriate training.
 - Regularly monitor, update and manage content posted on the school account.



- o Add an appropriate disclaimer to personal accounts when naming the school.

Process for creating new accounts

Members of the school community are encouraged to consider if a social media account will help them in their work, e.g. a history department Twitter account, or a school-related Facebook page. Anyone who wishes to create such an account must contact the Marketing Office with the following information:

- The aim of the account.
- The intended audience.
- How the account will be promoted.
- Who will run the account (at least two staff members should be named).
- Will the account be open or private/closed.

The Marketing Office must be satisfied that anyone running a social media account on behalf of the school has read and understood this policy and received appropriate training. This also applies to anyone who is not directly employed by the school, including volunteers or parents.

Monitoring posts about the school

As part of active social media engagement, the Marketing Office pro-actively monitors the Internet for public postings about the school. The school will consider responding to social media comments made by others according to our media policy.

Marketing Office

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Note:

- Revised April 2023: Personnel Change and minimum age requirement