

# SOCIAL NETWORKING AND SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS

---

## INTRODUCTION

Villanova College realizes that contemporary life requires adapting to ever changing methods of communication. The College has policies for appropriate use of Social Media by staff and students. As part of the Villanova College community, parents of the College also have a responsibility to engage appropriately with Social Media that is linked to the College. To this end, the College has developed the following guidelines to provide direction for parents when participating in Social Media activities, e.g. classroom blogs, the Villanova College Facebook Page, Year Level Facebook pages, emails or any other Social Media platform/s used by parents in connection with the College either directly, or indirectly in circumstances where the College, a parent, staff member and or/student of the College is identifiable.

The College encourages parents to set and maintain high ethical standards in their use of social networking. Be respectful of the opinions of others. Your posts and comments should help build and support the College community. Your online behaviour should reflect the same standards of honesty, respect, and consideration that you use in face-to-face interactions, and be in accordance with the values and ethos of the College.

## Rationale

These guidelines are intended for parents of Villanova College regarding the use of social networking and social media platforms whilst their son is enrolled at the College.

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide direction on the acceptable and appropriate use of social media by parents whilst their son is enrolled at Villanova College (hereby collectively referred to as 'the College Community'). The intent of this document is to assist members of the College Community to choose appropriate online learning platforms and to maintain ethical and professional standards in their use of social media.

These guidelines aim to provide guidance to the College Community in the use of social media with a view to reducing the instances of:

- Harassment, bullying and/or discrimination
- Inappropriate/offensive comments
- Inappropriate use of confidential information and intellectual property

Villanova College is well aware of how online social media platforms such as (but not limited to) Blogs, Wikis, Social Networks etc. are transforming the way we interact and learn. Online collaboration enables people to share knowledge and ideas regardless of rank, title or experience. The intention of these guidelines is not to dissuade the College Community taking part in online conversations and collaboration, but instead to empower all members to make appropriate and legal decisions so as to reduce the potential of negative impact on College members and the College's standing in our community.



## Definitions

The terms 'social media' and 'social networking' relate to and covers all current and future means of electronic communication and networking platforms which currently include (but are not limited to):

- Social Networking Websites and Applications such as Facebook, MySpace, Foursquare, Snapchat, Tinder, Pinterest, Tap Talk, Vine, WhatsApp and LinkedIn.
- Video and Image Sharing Websites and Apps such as Flickr, Instagram, YouTube and Vimeo.
- Micro-Blogging Websites and Applications such as Twitter, Instagram and Tumblr.
- Blogging Websites and Applications such as Blogger, Weebly, Wordpress and Blogster.
- Forums and Discussion Boards hosted on any website or through any Application.
- Online Encyclopaedias such as Wikipedia and Sidewiki.
- Gaming Websites and Applications.
- Vod and podcasting
- Email and instant messaging such as Facebook Messenger, Skype, iMessage etc.
- Any other Websites or Applications which allow individual users to use simple publishing tools of any description.

## Guidelines

These guidelines have been designed based on the following guiding principles, reflecting those which underpin all our actions as members of the College Community.

- You must adhere to the Terms of Use of the relevant Social Media platform/website, as well as copyright, privacy, defamation, contempt of court, discrimination, harassment, others applicable laws and College policies;
- You must ensure that you do not use or disclose any confidential information, post or repost to material that is offensive, obscene, defamatory, threatening, harassing, bullying, discriminatory, hateful, racist, sexist, infringes copyright, constitutes a contempt of court, breaches a court suppression order, or is otherwise unlawful;
- Child protection protocols must always be observed;
- Under no circumstances should disrespectful or offensive comments be made about staff, students, parents or the College in general. Parents are requested not to comment upon nor forward unsupported information, e.g. rumours concerning the College or comment or post material that might otherwise cause damage to the College's or a staff member's reputation or bring it into disrepute;
- Be mindful that, by posting your comments and having online conversations etc. on social networking pages under the impression of a 'private conversation' may still end up being shared into a more public domain, even with privacy settings on maximum;
- Parents should never discuss sensitive College matters with other parents using Facebook, blogs and other social media outlets. As noted above, when posting, even on the strictest privacy settings, parents should act on the assumption that all postings are in the public domain;



- The College's harassment policy applies to activities which are both online and in the physical workplace;
- Before posting photographs and/or videos, permission should be sought from the subject. This is especially the case where photographs and/or videos include parents of students and/or staff members of the College. No photographs of students of the College (with exception of a parent/s own children and where approved by the relevant parent/s from time to time) are posted;
- If you come across positive or negative remarks about the College and/or its operations online that you believe are important, you may pass those posts to the Principal who will consider such comments on a case by case basis;
- If you don't get it right, be sure to correct any mistake you make immediately, and make clear what you have done to fix it. Apologise if the situation warrants it. If it's a major mistake, e.g. reporting confidential information, let someone know immediately so the College can take proper steps to help minimize any impact it may have.

## Expressing Personal Views

It can be difficult to draw a line between personal and school life when using Social Media. Even when talking as an individual, people may perceive others to be talking on behalf of the College. By identifying oneself as a College parent, users are creating perceptions about their expertise or experience and about the College. Accordingly, members of the College community need to be careful that all content associated with them does not conflict with College policies and their obligations as a parent.

Just because conduct is outside the College or users have not clearly identified themselves as a College parent, it may nonetheless be in breach of your obligations to the College as a parent, whether on social media or otherwise. All users should exercise caution and common sense on that basis. Should a legitimate need arise for expressing opinions using social media, the following disclaimer should be used *"The views expressed on this site are my own and not those of Villanova College."*

These guidelines are not designed to infringe upon personal interaction or online conversations whilst speaking as an individual with no reference to the College, provided you are otherwise complying with the College's policies.

## Personal Liability

In addition to the expectations and directions of the College and the impact of social media users' posts and comments on the College and wider community, users should be aware that information they provide and statements they make may have significant consequences socially and legally on them directly. Legal and disciplinary actions may be taken by parties outside of the College and this may, in turn reflect poorly on the College through association.

Examples include (but are not limited to):

- Making statements about an individual may constitute defamation (in which case you may be personally liable under applicable legislation to the person about whom you make the statement) or unlawful discrimination, harassment or bullying (in which case you may be personally liable under applicable legislation).



- Using other persons' material, text, photographs, music, logos and trademarks may breach copyright laws.

## Reasonable Care

The terms and prescribed conduct in these guidelines are not intended to be exhaustive, nor do they anticipate every possible use of social media.

Members of the College Community are at all times encouraged to act with caution during their use of social media. Parents who are unsure what to do in particular circumstances should contact the Principal or his delegate.

## Compliance

Depending on the circumstances, non-compliance with this policy may constitute a breach of your enrolment contractual obligations, sexual harassment, child protection or criminal laws, discrimination or some other contravention of the law.

It is important to note that reports of cyber bullying and other technology abuses may result in a notification to the Police or other relevant authority where the College is obliged to do so.

Failure to comply with the policy by a parent may, in serious cases, put at risk the continuation of their child's enrolment at the College. In serious cases, termination of the enrolment contractual agreement by the College may result.

## Additional Guidelines for Parents

The following guidelines are designed as an additional set of recommendations and suggestions to help guide appropriate behaviour regarding social media.

- Be polite: Never use inappropriate language while posting online.
- Never post negative comments about others, especially members of the College community including students and staff members.
- Be accurate: Make sure you have all the facts before posting anything online.
- Always verify information with a reliable source first. Cite and link to these sources whenever possible.
- Be respectful: Remain constructive and respectful whenever posting online.
- Avoid discussing negative experiences or disagreements, especially soon after these have occurred. Take the time to evaluate the best course of action – often it will not involve posting online.
- Consider your audience: Use privacy settings to restrict personal information on otherwise public sites. Choose profile photos and avatars carefully and be thoughtful about the types of photos you upload.
- Be clear: Some readers may not be familiar with abbreviations and codes and thus may interpret them incorrectly. Avoid abbreviations and re-read any statements you wish to make before publishing.



- Be secure: Ensure any social network accounts you have are secure and not accessible by others using appropriate passwords or encryption. In addition, smartphones with social network account access should have passcodes or passwords set up.
- Stay private: Use appropriate privacy settings on all accounts so that only your friends, contacts or followers can access your photographs and other posts.

