1. Overview of the Social Media Policy

1.1 Introduction

The community at St. Fintan's High School acknowledges that increasing numbers of adults and children are using social networking sites. The widespread availability and use of social networking applications and media bring opportunities to understand, engage and communicate with audiences in new ways. It is important that we are able to use these technologies and services effectively and flexibly, for educational purposes. However, it is also important to ensure that we balance this with our reputation and the safety of our pupils and staff.

This policy and associated guidance was drafted in consultation with the staff, parents and pupils to protect staff and pupils and to advise school leadership on how to deal with potential inappropriate use of social networking sites. The policy requirements in this document aim to create a balanced approach to support innovation in learning whilst providing a framework of good practice.

1.2 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:
- Set standards of behaviour for the use of social media that are consistent with the values and expectations of St. Fintan's High School.
- Ensure the safe and responsible use of social media.
- Ensure that the reputation of the school is not adversely affected.
- Protect the wellbeing of our students and teachers by ensuring that appropriate guidelines are in place.

Most social media sites are targeted at older teenagers and adults and to reflect this, have age restrictive registration policies. However, in reality, it is still possible for children under the age of thirteen to register using false information. Being mindful of this, as parents, guardians and educators, we need to be vigilant of the children's use of social media and educate them about the importance of safety online.

1.3 Scope

This policy covers the use of social networking applications by all pupils and staff in our school. The requirements of this policy apply to all uses of social media whether they are used for school related purpose or to communicate with others.

Social media applications include, but are not limited to:

- Online discussion forums, e.g. Reddit, Twitter, Boards.ie

- Collaborative spaces e.g. Facebook, Google Classroom
- Media sharing services, e.g. YouTube, Whatsapp, Instagram, Snapchat

All school representatives should bear in mind that information they share through social media applications, even if they are on private spaces, are still subject to copyright, data protection and Freedom of Information legislation.

2. Use of Social Media in St. Fintan's High School

2.1 Social Networking as part of School Service
All proposals for using social networking applications as part of a school service (whether they are hosted by the school or by a third party) must first be approved by the Principal. There are many sites which can be of great use to the students' educational and social development, and sites such as Kahoot, Quizlet, Blooket etc. are currently in use in our school. Future use of further sites will be monitored as the need arises.

When using social networking applications, teachers should ensure that they are familiar with the platform before using it and should ensure that they log out when finished.

St. Fintan's High School has a Twitter and Facebook account, which are updated securely through the school app. All posts are moderated by the Deputy Principals before posting.

2.2 Guidelines for Use of Social Media
School representatives must adhere to the following guidelines. The guidelines below apply to *all* uses of social media applications by *all* members of the school community.

We at St. Fintan's High School expect that users of social networking applications will conduct themselves online with due consideration and respect for the dignity of others, and strictly in accordance with these guidelines.

2.2.1 Guidelines for Students
When using social media, students are expected to ensure that they:

- Read and agree to the terms and conditions of various social media sites, as many of them have age restrictions for their use.
- Are aware of what they are posting online and that social media sites and applications are public forums.
- Are not permitted to request access to a staff member's social media profile. If students attempt to do this, the member of staff is to refuse the student access and inform the Principal. The student's parents will be informed if this happens.
- Will not access social networking sites during the school day, unless under supervision and instruction from a teacher.
- Respect the rights and confidentiality of others.
- Do not impersonate or falsely represent another member of the school community.
- Do not bully, intimidate, abuse, harass or threaten other members of the school community.

- Do not make defamatory comments towards other members of the school community.
- Do not use offensive or threatening language or resort to personal abuse towards each other or members of the school community.
- Do not harm the reputation of St. Fintan's High School or those within its community.
- Do not upload or share video, audio or photographs of any member of the school community (student, parent or staff).
- Do not upload or share any video or photographs of any student where they can be identified as a St. Fintan's High School student by their uniform or by any other means.

2.2.2 Guidelines for Parents
Parents should

- Be aware that many social media sites have age restrictions that have implications for their children. Parents need to monitor their children's online social media activity, and read the terms and conditions of various social media sites and applications that their children are interested in using. Parents need to be aware that many of them have an age restriction for their use, e.g. Instagram is restricted to those **13 years of age and above.**
- Be aware that online postings and conversations are not private. Do not share confidential information, internal school discussions, or specific information about students, staff or other parents.
- Be conscious of the fact that expert advice given is that all users of social media sites should do whatever they can not to identify any child by name or associate them with a particular school.
- Not participate in spreading false or unsubstantiated rumours or false information in regards to the St. Fintan's High School community and its members.

2.2.3 Guidelines for Staff and Teachers
- Social networking sites such as Facebook or Instagram must not be used by staff as a platform for learning activities with students.
- Staff should not accept students as 'friends' on their own social media accounts or interact with students on social networking sites.
- Staff and student online interaction must only occur in an educational context.
- Staff are advised NOT to accept ex-students or parents of current students as friends on personal social media sites.
- Staff are personally responsible for content they publish online. Staff need to be mindful that what they publish will be public for a long time.
- The lines between public and private, personal and professional are blurred in the online world. If staff identify themselves online as affiliated with St. Fintan's High School, then they need to be aware that they are by definition representing the entire school community. Staff should ensure that content associated with them is consistent with their work at the school and the school's values and ethos.
- Staff should not participate in spreading false or unsubstantiated rumours or false information in regards to the St. Fintan's High School community and its members.
- When posting online, staff should not post confidential student information.

- Staff should visit the privacy settings and the security settings on their social media profiles. At a minimum, staff should have all privacy settings set to 'only friends'.

3. Disclosure of Inappropriate Use

Where a disclosure of cyber bullying or other inappropriate use of Social Media is made, the school will always investigate in order to protect those involved. If the event originates outside the school, we will endeavour to assist in brokering a solution between the parties involved, in accordance with the school's Anti-Bullying Policy.

If any member of staff receives a disclosure that a member of the school community is using a social networking site in an inappropriate manner as detailed above, they should report it to the Principal.

Review

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Implementation

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 15th November 2022 and circulated to all staff and parents. It will be implemented from November 2022.

Signed: _Pat J Reilly_   Date: _15/10/22_
(for and on behalf of the Board of Management)

SIGNED: _Kathy Mull_   DATE: _15/11/22_
PRINCIPAL