

Social media for schools and preschools policy

This is a mandated policy under the operational policy framework. Any edits to this page must follow the process outlined on the [creating, updating and deleting operational policies](#) page.

Overview

This policy details the department's position for social media use by schools and preschools.

The intention of this policy is to establish a culture of transparency, trust and integrity in social media activities and to encourage the integration of social media into our teaching and learning environments.

This policy recognises that all communication by department staff will comply with the standards of conduct and behaviour as outlined in the [Code of Ethics for the South Australian Public Sector](#).

The accompanying [social media guideline](#) outlines the practical implications of introducing and managing social media platforms. It also provides information for staff to help children and young people in the application and safe use of social media.

[Cyber safety resources](#) are available on EDi to help leaders, educators and parents learn how young people engage online, while observing legislation, policies and practices that promote learning, protection and safety.

Scope

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers and contractors working in a school or preschool who use a social media platform in their professional capacity, or who identify themselves as a school or preschool employee, volunteer or contractor in a personal capacity. It assists staff who use social media to:

- engage internally with staff or with the wider community as a communications tool
- showcase children and students' work
- integrate with, and facilitate, teaching and learning
- administer social media platforms in an authorised capacity, or make contributions in a professional or personal capacity on education-related issues.

Detail

Requirements for establishing social media activities and profiles

School and preschool information and communication technology (ICT) coordinators and principals can set and control the ICT environment necessary to allow the use of social media while ensuring that appropriate safeguards are in place, to the best of their abilities.

When setting up and maintaining social media, you must adhere to the [acceptable use policies for schools, preschools and children's services sites standard \(PDF, 161.8 KB\)](#) and [ICT security standard \(PDF, 294.8 KB\)](#).

The acceptable use policy reinforces the type of behaviours that are appropriate when using departmental ICT facilities and services.

Adherence to these policies must be in the form of a written agreement signed by staff, students, parents and guardians (as appropriate). A significant element of an acceptable use agreement is to emphasise strategies for personal safety. The agreement must outline:

- the terms and conditions of using departmental ICT facilities
- appropriate online behaviours
- access privileges
- consequences for non-compliance.

In the case of students, involving parents and guardians in these agreements reinforces the fact that the agreement is taken seriously and is part of the partnership between school and home.

Professional use of social media

When creating or posting to a social media platform that officially represents the school or preschool, staff must:

- be aware of the specific social media channels and etiquette, and understand the views and feelings of the target community
- ensure all material published is respectful of all individuals, the department and the specific social media site
- not publish any material that is offensive, obscene, defamatory, threatening, harassing, bullying, discriminatory, hateful, racist, sexist, a breach of a court suppression order, or is otherwise unlawful
- ensure that all content published is accurate and not misleading

- ensure all information posted or comments made on government policy:
 - is appropriate to the individual's area of expertise and authority
 - remains politically neutral
 - does not breach the [Code of Ethics for the South Australian Public Sector](#)
 - does not breach any confidentiality guidelines
 - is not the first or a significant announcement on a topic (unless specific permission has been given).
- respect copyright laws and attribute work to the original source wherever possible
- protect personal details
- use government branding in accordance with the [Government of South Australia branding guidelines \(PDF 2869KB\)](#)
- ensure any young people involved understand the rules of operation of each social media site and measures are in place to protect them from any potential risks.

Schools and preschools should not endorse companies, products, opinions or causes unless an official endorsement already exists. For guidance on this issue, refer to the [DPC Circular 023: Private Sector Endorsements on Government Public Communications \(PDF 46KB\)](#).

If staff notice inappropriate or unlawful online content relating to the department, school or preschool, or content published in breach of this policy, report it to the Communications directorate at Education.SocialMedia@sa.gov.au or 8207 2197.

Children, students and social media

Incorporating new and emerging media into development and learning is important to enable our young people to learn how to navigate their global community. When staff introduce young people to any new media, they must ensure to the best of their abilities, that their safety is protected. When introducing social media, school and preschool leaders must set up processes that enable discussions and strategies to help young people use social networking tools effectively and safely. Processes must appropriately address the needs of vulnerable children, including those children in state care.

Staff must maintain a professional relationship with students. This means establishing clear professional boundaries with students, to protect everyone from misunderstandings or a violation of professional relationships.

[Protective practices for staff and their interactions with children and young people \(PDF, 650.1 KB\)](#) assists staff to establish and maintain appropriate boundaries. Most importantly, teachers must not have children or young people in their education community as 'friends' on their personal or private social media sites.

However, as long as set rules and guidelines for acceptable use are in place and content is monitored, you can build a social media presence, eg Facebook, for the school, preschool, classroom or subject within a class. Class groups should be set up as closed groups, so that permission needs to be given by the page administrator to gain access.

[Information and resources on cyber safety](#) is available on EDi.

Roles and responsibilities

Communications directorate

Administer social media policies and procedures.

Provide strategic advice, support and development of social media applications and tools.

Coordinate the availability of materials and tools to support staff in their use of social media.

Develop and maintain appropriate standards, guidelines and tools for social media usage.

Manage and monitor the department's social media platforms.

Assist school and preschool leaders and ICT professionals with social media implementation and use.

Monitor and review this policy and related procedures every 6 months.

Principals, line managers, ICT coordinators

Ensure approval for social media activity from principal or director.

Ensure that IT requirements for establishing social media activities and profiles are in place.

Broadly consult with the community affected by social media before establishing new media use.

Ensure cyber-safety use agreements are in place for all staff and young people.

Ensure staff understand and comply with this policy.

Provide relevant training to carers, teachers and young people who will be using social media.

Ensure protective practices are in place to safeguard carers, teachers and young people.

Provide processes for staff and young people to identify and report offensive online material or behaviour.

Act quickly to remedy issues when they arise and support staff and young people through these processes.

Model best practice social media usage.

Ensure that IT access has appropriate safeguards in place to protect all young people.

Teaching and children's services staff

Ensure approval has been granted for social media activity from the relevant principal or director.

Teach topics contained in [keeping safe: child protection curriculum](#).

Teach strategies to maintain a positive online presence and protect identity.

Teach children and young people how to identify and avoid inappropriate materials.

Ensure the school or preschool conforms with government branding standards and clearly identifies the school or preschool.

Children and young people

Follow the school's cyber-safety use agreement.

Avoid any involvement with material or activities that could put personal safety at risk, or the privacy, safety or security of the school or other members of the school community.

Apply cyber-safety strategies and instructions when using social media.

Supporting information

Related legislation

[Equal Opportunity Act 1984](#)

[Disability Services Act 1993](#)

[Work Health and Safety Act 2012](#)

Related policies

[Code of Ethics for the South Australian public sector](#)

[DPC circular 023: private sector endorsements on government public communications](#)

[Social media policy: SA Government \(PDF 277KB\)](#)

[Information and records management policy](#)

[Practical guide for the use of email and the internet guideline \(PDF, 239.2 KB\)](#)

[Protective practices for staff in their interactions with children and young people guidelines for staff working or volunteering \(PDF, 650.1 KB\)](#)

[Acceptable use policies for schools, preschools and children's services sites standard \(PDF, 161.8 KB\)](#)

[Office of the eSafety Commissioner](#)

[Copyright](#)

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