

**Peponi House
Preparatory School
Nairobi, Kenya**



Social Media Policy

Background

The intention of this policy is to provide guidelines and recommended parameters of appropriate use of social media for pupils, parents and staff. Emotional trauma, stress or bullying affecting members of any community caused by inappropriate use of social media is something that can be avoided through sensible, empathic and appropriate use of technology.

Any parent enrolling their child as a pupil and any member of staff accepting a contract of employment at Peponi House School agrees to adhere to the following guidelines.

The term social media, in this context, refers to all forms of electronic communication that may occur between pupils, parents and staff in any combination. This includes e-mail, personal websites, blogs, WhatsApp, WhatsApp group chat, Facebook, Facebook Messenger, Instagram, Snap Chat, chat rooms and any other electronic communication or electronic social forum.

Guidelines: pupil-staff / staff-pupil

Absolutely NO form of social communication should occur between staff and pupils or pupils and staff through social media.

Academic communication, including homework tasks, specific task guidance, additional support and project assignment may occur using staff email addresses which may be accessed and viewed by the school's IT department and Senior Management, should inappropriate use be suspected.

Academic communication should, in the first instance, be communicated with parents and pupils through Firefly. Such communication may also be shared through openly accessible educational applications such as Padlet. All communication of this type must be educationally based and should be an open forum that is visible to all parties.

Neither pupils nor staff should invite or accept an invitation to join a social media forum for the purpose of personal or social communication.

Guidelines: staff-parents / parents-staff

It is recommended that staff also avoid social media communication with parents although this may not always be practical and appropriate. When staff have links with parents through social media, any communication must avoid discussion of school-based topics, particularly specific pupils, other members of staff or other parents. This is especially true if the communication stems from a school-based issue or problem that may involve derogatory or inflammatory comments directed toward any pupil, member of staff, or parent. Any issue of this nature must be dealt with in school via the usual chain of communication which may include any of the following: Form Tutor, Year Group Coordinator, Deputy Head Pastoral, Headmaster.

Guidelines: pupil-pupil

Social media communication between pupils is inevitable. It is very difficult for a school to monitor actions carried out in the privacy of the home; however, the issues and effects generated by inappropriate use of social media often surface or culminate back in the school environment. The school has every right and a responsibility to protect pupils affected by such issues, even if they stem from activities at home. The school is reliant on the good practice of parents to guide their children's use of social media and monitor it appropriately. The school will offer advice and guidance through e-safety presentations organised annually.

As a general rule of good practice, parents should regularly check the communications that occur between theirs and other children and all electronic communication devices such as mobile phones, tablets and computers should be used openly at home, not in the confines of a closed office or bedroom.

Guidelines: parent-parent

Of greater complexity is the use of social media by parental groups, as it is impossible for a school to control or closely monitor the actions of parents. However, inappropriate use of social media, by parents, can have serious repercussions within the school community. Of particular concern, is the use of group chat forums such as WhatsApp group chat. These applications can be very useful when organising social gatherings such as birthday parties or sharing logistical information for events such as fetes and school trips. However, such forums should never be used for discussing an individual teacher, pupil or another parent, especially if the communication stems from a school-based issue or problem that may involve derogatory or inflammatory comments directed toward any other party. These issues must be dealt with in school via the usual chain of communication which may include the following: Form Tutor, Year Group Coordinator, Deputy Head Pastoral, Headmaster.

Guidelines: Parent-Pupil

Parents should avoid all personal social media contact with any pupil, other than their own, unless it is an open forum between consenting families.

Sanctions

Any member of staff found to be using social media inappropriately will be dealt with in a disciplinary manner at the discretion of the Headmaster and/or Board of Directors. Dependent on the severity of the specific case, this could vary from a verbal warning to dismissal.

Any pupil found using social media inappropriately, at home or school, will be dealt with following normal school disciplinary procedure. This could vary from a verbal warning to expulsion, under extreme circumstances, although it is hoped that sensible intervention from staff with appropriate support from parents would never see a situation escalate this far.

Any parent found using social media inappropriately will be dealt with in the most appropriate manner. This could vary from a polite request to reconsider their actions and apologise for any distress caused to any other party, to legal action and the possible exclusion of the family from the school. It would be hoped that sensible communication and mutual respect would never see an incident reach this point.

Please note that the purpose of this policy is to protect all members of the school community, especially the children, from inappropriate communication and unfounded accusation that may arise through unregulated and uncensored social media communication. Any pupil, parent or staff member who has a complaint, concern or issue with any other member of the school community is advised to avoid all forms of social media to air their concerns and pursue the proper channels of direct, face to face communication.
