

Appropriate Use of Social Media

Proserpine State High School is committed to promoting the responsible and positive use of social media sites and apps.

This policy reflects the importance of students at Proserpine State High School engaging in appropriate online behaviour.

Proserpine State High School acknowledges the growing popularity of social media both as a communication and an educational tool and supports its appropriate use. It also acknowledges the potential for damage to be caused (either directly or indirectly) to students, families and staff through the inappropriate use of social media.

Proserpine State High School further acknowledges the opportunities that technology and the internet provide to students for learning, being creative and socialising online. Use of online communication and social media sites and apps can provide positive social development experiences through an opportunity to develop friendships and shape identities.

When used safely, social media sites and apps can provide positive opportunities for social learning and development. However, inappropriate or misguided use can lead to negative outcomes for the user and others.

As outlined in Proserpine State High School's Student Code of Conduct – Preventing and Responding to Bullying (including cyberbullying), it is unacceptable for students to bully, harass or victimise another person whether within Proserpine State High School grounds or while online. Inappropriate online behaviours can have a negative impact on student learning and the good order and management of the school—whether those behaviours occur during or outside school hours.

Students must understand that they are responsible for the content they publish on social media platforms so it is important they understand what is expected of them while using social media.

It's important to remember that sometimes negative comments posted about the school community have a greater impact than expected. This policy offers information about how to use social media in relation to comments or posts about the school community. Reputations of students, teachers, schools, principals and even parents can be permanently damaged — and in some cases, serious instances of inappropriate online behaviour are dealt with by police and the court system.

Important considerations of social media

- The majority of young people use social media sites and apps on a daily basis to keep in contact with friends, entertainment and for school work. Unfortunately, some young people misuse social media technologies and engage in cyberbullying.
- Social media by its nature will result in the disclosure and sharing of personal information. By signing up for a social media account, users are providing their personal information.
- Students need to remember that the internet is a free space and many social media sites and apps have limited restrictions placed upon allowable content and regulated procedures for the removal of concerning posts.
- Social media sites and apps are designed to share online content widely and rapidly. Once students place information and/or pictures online, they have little to no control over how that content is used.
- The internet reaches a global audience. Even if students think that comments or photos have been deleted, there can be archived records of the material that will continue to be searchable into the future.
- Inappropriate online behaviour has the potential to embarrass and affect students, staff, parents, the school and others for years to come.

Appropriate use of social media

- Students of Proserpine State High School are expected to engage in the appropriate use of social media. Specific examples of appropriate use of social media sites and apps include:
 - Ensure that personal information, such as full name, address, phone number, school name and location or anyone else's personal information, is not shared.
 - Think about what is posted online, and how it could be interpreted – avoid posting content that would be inappropriate to display in a crowded room, or in front of influential people. Once content is posted online, control is lost.
 - Avoid provoking or engaging with another user who is displaying inappropriate or abusive behaviour. Rather than responding, address cyberbullying concerns using the online reporting tools (STYMIE), school processes and seek support from an adult.
- If inappropriate online behaviour directly impacts on the good order and management of Proserpine State High School, the school may impose disciplinary consequences for that behaviour regardless of whether the behaviour occurs during or outside of school hours.
- Disciplinary consequences could include suspension and/or exclusion. In serious cases of inappropriate online behaviour, the school may also make a report to the police for further investigation.
- Proserpine State High School will review and act accordingly to concerns of cyberbullying or inappropriate online behaviour where the incident in question does not directly impact upon the good order and management of the school. For example, where cyberbullying occurs between a student of this school and a student of another school outside school hours.

Inappropriate use of social media and electronic communication

Examples of social media and electronic communication technology incidents which may impact on the good order and management of the school include:

- Creating imposter accounts of other students and teachers on social media apps, websites or online gaming platforms.
 - Student A creates a social media account in the name of Student B. Student A uses this account to impersonate Student B and send harassing messages to other students.
- Sexting: possessing, taking, distributing or posting nude or explicit images or video of another student, coercing or pressuring another student to take, distribute nude or explicit images or video of themselves.
 - Student A asks Student B to take a photo of themselves naked. Student B takes the photo and sends it to Student A. Student A then shares the image of Student B throughout the school.
- Creating meme, gossip or hate pages about a school on social media apps or websites where the online presence is used to target students and staff members of that school.
 - A group of students create a social media account for other students of their school to post offensive and mean 'gossip' about other students.
- Violent and dangerous videos: filming, sharing device-to-device or distributing online content, which involves students, involved in violent, dangerous or risky acts.
 - Two students get into a fight during lunch time. A number of students film the fight and start sharing it on social media.
 - Dangerous or risky behaviours which involve choking, asphyxiation or other activities dangerous to a student's health and wellbeing.
- Taking photos or filming or voice recording a staff member or other student without consent and sharing the image or video online.
 - A group of students film their English teacher during class without consent. The students then share this video on social media and write harassing comments about the teacher who is in the video.
- Cyber abuse or cyberbullying: online behaviour which is reasonably likely to have a seriously

threatening, intimidating, harassing or humiliating effect on a person. This behaviour may occur on various online spaces such as social media websites/apps, school email or online gaming platforms.

- Student A posts a bullying comment on Student B's photo they recently uploaded on social media. Student B deletes the comment but Student A continues to send harassing comments on social media directed at Student B.

Advice for parents

Is it appropriate to comment or post about schools, staff or students?

Parental and community feedback is important for schools and the department. If you have a compliment, complaint or enquiry about an issue at school, the best approach is to speak directly to the school about the matter, rather than discussing it in a public forum.

While many schools use social media to update parents of school notices, the department prefers that parents contact schools directly with a compliment, complaint or enquiry due to privacy considerations. Imagine if your doctor, accountant or banking institution tried to contact you to discuss important matters via Facebook.

If you have raised an issue with a school or know that another person has, consider refraining from discussing those details on social media, particularly the names of anyone involved.

Keep comments calm and polite, just as you would over the telephone or by email. If you encounter negative or derogatory content online which involves the school, hinders a child's learning and/or affects the school community at large, contact the school principal.

What about other people's privacy?

If you upload photos of your children, be mindful of who might be in the background. You might be happy to share your child's successes with your friends and family via social media, but some parents are not. If you are tagging or naming students, consider that other parents may not want their child's name attached to images online.

What if I encounter problem content?

Taking the following steps may help resolve the issue in a constructive way:

- refrain from responding
- take a screen capture or print a copy of the concerning online content
- if you consider problem content to be explicit, pornographic or exploitative of minors, you should keep a record of the URL of the page containing that content but NOT print or share it. The URL can be provided to the school principal, or police, as needed for escalation of serious concerns
- block the offending user
- report the content to the social media provider or the [Office of the e-Safety Commissioner](#)

Possible civil or criminal ramifications of online commentary

A serious instance of inappropriate online behaviour may constitute a criminal offence and become a police matter. For example, online content may substantiate the offence of 'using a carriage service to menace, harass or cause offence' (Criminal Code Act 1995 (Cth) s. 474.17). School staff may contact their union or obtain personal legal advice if they feel that online content seriously impacts their reputation. Defamatory online content may give rise to litigation under the Defamation Act 2005 (Qld).

Cybersafety and Reputation Management (CRM)

The Department of Education employs a dedicated team of experts to assist in maintaining the integrity of the department's reputation with regards to cybersafety and reputation management issues, effectively leading the development and implementation of departmental cybersafety processes.

This team provides **direct support for schools** to respond to concerns of inappropriate online behaviour and misuse of information and communication technology.

The team provides a [guide for parents](#) with important information about cybersafety and cyberbullying, and suggestions about what you can do if your child is a target or responsible for inappropriate online behaviour.

The team has also developed a [Cyberbullying and reputation management](#) (Department employees only) resource to assist principals in incident management.

For more information about cybersafety sessions at your school, or for assistance with issues relating to online behaviour, contact the [team](#) (Department employees only).