

29 August 2018

POLICY & GUIDELINES: USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN CMS

INTRODUCTION

Social media – connecting and interacting online to exchange ideas, observations and innovations – is becoming an increasingly prevalent part of everyone's social, personal, and professional life. But if it is to extend to the teaching workplace, and when boundaries between professional and personal life are prone to distortion, it is imperative that we determine what is and what is not acceptable.

The Internet provides a range of social media tools that allow users to interact with one another, from rediscovering friends on social networking sites such as *Facebook* to keeping up with other people's lives on *Twitter* and maintaining pages on internet encyclopedias such as *Wikipedia*. While recognizing the benefits of these media as new opportunities for communication, **this policy sets out the principles that CMS staff and students are expected to follow when using social media.** The principles set out in this policy are designed to ensure that Teaching/Non-teaching staff members use social media responsibly, to ensure the safety and security of children, and to avoid any incidents which could bring the organization into disrepute.

The Hon'ble Supreme Court has recently expressed serious concern over the infringement of "Right to Privacy" on the pretext of exercising the right to freedom of speech. A law to bring the individual's deeds in the periphery of offence also has been aggressively advocated.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all the "staff members" working with CMS within the scope of any sort of employment (including permanent, temporary, contractual, 'security', ad-hoc, and consulting staff), along with all students enrolled at all the campuses of CMS. This policy covers personal and professional use of social media, including usage of the CMS website and CMS IT Portal hosted and maintained by and on behalf of CMS.

This policy applies to personal web-spaces, including social networking sites such as *Facebook*, *MySpace*, *Instagram*, *Tumblr*, *SnapChat*, etc.; blogs and micro-blogs such as *Twitter*; chatrooms and forums; podcasts and other online broadcast media; open-access online encyclopedias and information repositories such as *Wikipedia*; social bookmarking sites such as *del.icio.us*; and content sharing sites such as *Flickr* and *YouTube*.

The Internet is a fast-paced, continually changing technology, and it is therefore impossible to cover all circumstances and emerging media – yet the principles set out in this policy must be followed irrespective of the medium.

USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

We have identified the following areas where online facilities can be helpful, and indeed their use is not only allowed but encouraged for such activities:

- Helping with homework and project assignments
- Finding and sharing educational resources
- Providing news and updates to pupils and parents
- Promoting school and class achievements
- Recording and archiving lesson content for revision
- Keeping up-to-date with the latest pedagogy and educational news

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Internet-based tools for the above are efficient, appealing to students, and easy to access for parents and teachers. However, **for every instance of innovative and inspiring use, there is no excuse for forgetting what is professional and what is personal when it comes to communication – whether in style, content or context. Before posting anything, it is always worth considering the outcome first.**

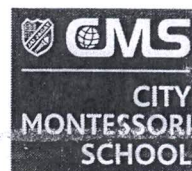
RULES TO APPLY STRICTLY IN CMS

1. The individual shall be personally responsible for every post, blog, comment, or uploading of files, images, and videos in every case. CMS shall not be held liable/responsible for any communication done by staff/students/parents/guardians in any context which has not been given prior sanction by the competent authority (Principal).
2. Outside of strictly school-based, professional requirements, teachers shall not initiate any contact with students or parents. Sending unsolicited messages can always be misconstrued and lead to situations which could be damaging for both the teacher and the school.
3. Staff members should not have any contact through any personal social medium with any students/parents/guardians as it is likely to constitute a conflict of interest and may breach professional boundaries and decorum.
4. Staff members shall not accept or send any invitation to connect on any social media from any student, parent, or guardian. This means, for example, that no staff is permitted to be the 'Facebook friend' of any student or parent.
 - a. If a student or parent happens to be a close family member of a teacher, an exemption to this rule may be made at the concerned teacher's discretion
 - b. Students and staff may be connected on social media *after* a student or teacher leaves from the school and is officially no longer on rolls as an employee or student
5. Under the above section entitled 'Use of Social Media', helpful online facilities have been mentioned. As per these encouraged online media, the correct medium for communication with students regarding school-work is 'Google Classroom', and the correct medium for communication with parents regarding school-related matters is SMS messages to be sent through the ERP system. No other medium of communication is acceptable, with the following exceptions:
 - a. Communication with parents which cannot be summarized through SMS should be sent in written form under the Principal's signature/account, as a formal letter/email
 - b. Telephone contact may be established with parents **only in the case of** genuine emergencies or very urgent communication, if it is done in the Principal's knowledge and with her consent; however, wherever possible, giving the personal telephone numbers of staff to parents should be avoided
 - c. It is understood that some teachers have set up 'WhatsApp groups' and similar modes of communication with the parents of their classes. While this is strongly discouraged, special exceptions may be made for those teachers who have already come to rely on these communications, provided that the following conditions are met:
 - i. Written permission of the Principal is obtained for maintaining such a group
 - ii. The Principal is a member of any such group, in the capacity of a 'group admin'
 - iii. That these groups include a parent/guardian of **all children** in the class, rather than only the parents of any subset of the children in the class.

- iv. Only official communication within the stipulated time, as decided by The Principal, no social, political, religious messages etc. shall be populated and allowed by the Admin
6. It has been observed that 'WhatsApp groups' and similar modes of communication have been established by some teachers with their *students*. As per Point 5, this is **strictly prohibited** according to this policy and if any such groups exist they must be disbanded with immediate effect. Communication with students outside school should be done only through 'Google Classroom' or educational tools approved by the Management.
7. When communicating with students or parents through any medium, staff must take care to write in proper language – e.g. they must not write shorthand such as 'u' instead of 'you'.
8. Staff and students must not make any form of public posting on any social media which portrays the organization in a negative light, which may bring the organization or any of its staff into disrepute, which exposes the school to legal liability, or which defames any staff or student at CMS. This applies to all staff and students, even when they are posting only on their 'personal' social media pages.
- a. Private information that staff members have access to as part of their employment, including personal information about students/colleagues/peer group and their family members, and private CMS school information, must not be discussed on personal/official web space.
- b. Social media can become a forum for inappropriate, unwelcome remarks about colleagues or others. Any form of online bullying, harassment, or discrimination will not be tolerated, whether amongst students or staff.
9. Staff and students are prohibited from establishing any social media page, site, or account claiming to represent CMS, CMS's management, CMS's leadership (e.g. Principals and Departments), CMS's campuses, CMS's events, or CMS's initiatives and programmes, without obtaining prior written permission from the office of the Director of Strategy.
- a. It has been observed that many unauthorized accounts and pages have been made, including
- i. 44 pages/groups on Facebook, the authenticity of which cannot be determined
- ii. Numerous Instagram accounts, in which CMS's name is being openly defamed
- b. In light of this policy, either permission for these sites must be obtained, or they must be closed down. If the owner of such sites is traceable and they are affiliated with CMS as staff or students, formal disciplinary action will be taken against site-owners who do not comply.
- c. The visual representation of CMS on any approved sites must be in accordance with the guidelines at www.cmseducation.org/cmsbrand
10. The CMS logo, and any visuals involving any CMS premises, may not be used on any social media without prior written permission being obtained from the office of the Director of Strategy. Any use of the CMS logo and official CMS branding or visual identities must be in accordance with the guidelines at www.cmseducation.org/cmsbrand
11. Many CMS Staff will have been provided with official login IDs for various media and applications, including official CMS email ID ('@cmseducation.org'), Tata ClassEdge login ID, ERP login ID, internet access login ID, Human Resource Management System ('HRM Thread') login ID, Purchase/Inventory Management System ('MyOfficeHub') login ID, and Transport Management System login ID. The passwords for such official IDs must strictly remain only with the individual to whom they have been issued, and no individual is authorized to give

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access to their accounts/passwords to anyone else, whether inside or outside the organization.

- a. This applies even to the authority of seniors – e.g. a teacher who is asked by their Principal to hand over an official ID/password reserves the right to refuse, unless the Management has authorized the Principal's request in writing.
 - b. The Management reserves absolute authority over the use of any officially-allocated user-ID by any staff, and may thus be treated as an exception to rule 10(a).
12. The email ID may be used for internal and external communication with a formal, focused approach, and should not be used for personal correspondence. CMS staff email addresses and other official contact details must not be used for setting up personal social media accounts or to communicate through such media. It is a 'Google Account' and may also be used as the same generic login ID for other tools such as the CMS IT Portal and Google Classroom. Management reserves the right to reset the password of any official CMS ID and view the contents; thus it is very much in the interest of the user to use such IDs only for official purposes.
13. Staff members must not edit open access online encyclopedias such as *Wikipedia* in a personal capacity at work without obtaining the Management's prior permission. This is because the source of the correction will be recorded as the employer's IP address and the intervention will, therefore, appear as if it comes from the employer itself.
14. CMS only permits limited personal use of social media while at work. Access to social media sites for personal reasons is not encouraged and staff are expected to access these sites within their own time. Staff members are expected to devote their contracted hours of work to their professional duties, so personal use of the Internet should not be on CMS's time.

FURTHER GUIDELINES TO NOTE

- Staff members are strongly advised to ensure that they set the privacy levels of their personal sites as strictly as they can and to opt out of public listings on social networking sites to protect their own privacy. Staff members should keep their passwords confidential, change them often and be careful about what is posted online; it is not safe to reveal home addresses, telephone numbers and other personal information. It is a good idea to use a separate email address just for social networking so that any other contact details are not given away.
- Staff who witness other staff making inappropriate use of social media should report the cases to their relevant authority.
- Children below 13 years of age should be strongly discouraged from using any social media.

The above policies and guidelines are issued in the best interests of the organisation, its employees, and CMS students. Strict administrative action shall be initiated against those who fail to comply with these policies and guidelines.

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