

NMS Social Media Guidelines for students, teachers and parents

Social media have become an integrated part of everyday life. We are using social media such as (but not limited to) WhatsApp, Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube, Twitter and Facebook, in order to chat, share videos, music and photos, and to gain and share information. We understand that social media also play an important role in the way you learn. WhatsApp class-group chats are commonly used to support a growing number of learners. Sharing information about lessons missed or topics not understood, can be a great help for students. Yet, these group chats also cause problems. An argument that originates in a school setting can easily escalate online. Students will feel left out when they have not been included in, or get kicked out of a WhatsApp-group. Students badmouth a classmate, without realizing he or she is actually a part of the group and therefore privy to everything. A carelessly typed derogatory comment remains in the group chat, for everyone to see.

Why guidelines?

The school is aware of the fact that many students start using social media like Facebook and WhatsApp before they have reached the legal minimum age. This is a decision taken by the student and/or his or her parents or legal guardians. When students enter the NMS Primary school they may not use their mobile phones, unless their teacher explicitly allows this for educational purposes. From this follows that NMS can't be made responsible for problems, arising from the use of social media by Primary students. However, a recent internal survey shows that at least 75% of all students in year 6 have a WhatsApp account, and that nearly all of these students engage in class-group chats. This activity helps and supports many students, but also causes students to feel left out or actually be excluded, or even cyberbullied. As class-chats and – groups exist because of the connection to school, NMS feels an obligation to provide a few basic expectations on the use of social media. These are intended to help students, staff and parents avoid any pitfalls, while still making the best use of social media for study and research as well as social purposes.

Expectations

The Nelson Mandela School has formulated these guidelines as expectations. NMS expects its staff, students and the parent body to adhere to these guidelines. In case of a serious breach by students and staff during school time, normal school sanctions will be imposed. The NMS Parent Association (GEV) will be involved whenever parents' actions disregard the NMS social media guidelines. In case of any criminal activity involving social media by a student, staff-member or parent related to the NMS, the school will notify the authorities.

Social Media Expectations for NMS Primary Students

- ✓ You are aware of the legal age limit for the social networking sites you are using
- ✓ You will inform your parents if you are using any social networking sites
- ✓ You need to be aware how to report abuse and inappropriate content
- ✓ Don't access social media on school devices, or on your own devices while you are at school
- ✓ Don't make inappropriate comments about the school, teachers or other children

Social Media Expectations for NMS staff

- ✓ Refrain from accepting friend requests from current pupils, or ex-pupils, especially under the age of 13
- ✓ Refrain from discussing school-related matters with NMS pupils or parents via social media.
- ✓ In school-related correspondence, use a school email address wherever possible
- ✓ Only post photos of school events on the school website after this has been cleared with the parents
- ✓ Only post things that you would be happy to be attributed to you as a teaching professional
- ✓ Use the tightest privacy settings possible

Social Media Expectations for NMS parents

- ✓ Do not discuss school-related matters with NMS staff via social media.
- ✓ Only post photos of school events on the school website after this has been cleared with the other parents
- ✓ Refrain from interacting with NMS students via social media or your children's social media
- ✓ Do raise your queries & concerns directly with the school or the GEV reps, rather than via social media.
- ✓ Refrain from posting anything malicious about the school or any member of the school community.
- ✓ Be involved and informed about your child's social media and Internet use.

WhatsApp Class Chat Guidelines:

Class chat groups are not advisable in Primary. However, if the majority of students make use of such a class chat, NMS suggests the following rules of thumb:

- ✓ The class community (students) chooses a student admin for the WhatsApp class-group.
- ✓ The admin creates the group and includes ALL students of the class who wish to be included
- ✓ Generally, no group chat activity later than 9 PM
- ✓ Problems will be discussed during Social (media) Learning lessons

General Social Media Tips

- 1. Think about your personal safety.** Don't reveal data about you that a) could be used to impersonate you/steal your identity (such as date and place of birth), b) might reveal your actual whereabouts or when you're not somewhere (at home, for example), c) might cost you money (look out for scams and freebies: anything that looks too good to be true, usually is!)
- 2. Get the tone right.** Never forget that your postings, whether they are on a blog or public Facebook site, can be read by anyone. Ensure your tone is right and strike the right balance between informality and formality.
- 3. Think twice before posting.** There is no such thing as privacy on the Internet. Word spreads quickly. Search engines can turn up posts or images years after they are created - even after you think you have deleted them - and comments can be forwarded or copied. Inappropriate or inaccurate comments, which are damaging to a person's reputation, should be avoided. Do not say anything online that you would not say in public. Think carefully about posting anything which you would not want your grandmother to read, let alone your future prospective university or employer.
- 4. What might seem anonymous usually isn't.** Your use can be tracked, even if you think you have an anonymous user account.
- 5. Make it accurate.** If you are making a serious contribution to a debate via social media, make sure you get all your facts right, as you would when writing an essay or a report.
- 6. Be respectful.** Content on a social media site could encourage comments or discussion of opposing ideas – the audience is far wider than your peers. Consider all comments and responses carefully in light of how they would reflect on you or NMS. Be aware that any misuse of social media might attract complaints from other students, which may result in disciplinary action.

What Is Cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying is the use of digital-communication tools (such as the Internet and cell phones) to make another person feel angry, sad, or scared, usually again and again. Examples of cyberbullying include sending hurtful or deceitful texts or instant messages, posting embarrassing photos or video on social media, spreading mean rumors online or with mobile phones, calling anonymously or sending anonymous messages. By definition, it occurs among young people. When an adult is involved, such behaviour is defined as cyber-harassment or cyberstalking. This is a crime that can have legal consequences.

- **Stand up, don't stand by.** Bullies are never alone. Don't be a bystander!
- **Think before you click.** What's online, stays online.
- **If anything makes you feel uncomfortable, tell a trusted adult.**