



# PRETORIA BOYS HIGH SCHOOL

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## SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid growth of social networks represents a significant development in the evolution of media and communication in the world. Combined with the advancement in smartphone technology and broadband internet we live in the most connected period in human history where we have nearly unlimited and unfettered access to instant global communications platforms.

These powerful channels have enormous potential to reach and engage almost limitless audiences. Furthermore, the universal accessibility of social networks fundamentally alters the power dynamic of users who now have the power to distribute information and opinion on a scale that was previously the preserve of major media outlets.

Importantly, this access extends to school children, including the boys of Pretoria Boys High School.

*Thus, with the power of instantaneous communications on a potentially global scale comes a tremendous and profound responsibility.*

This social media policy aims to set in place key rules about the use of social media while boys, parents, administrators and teachers are participants in the daily activities of PBHS and to act as a guide to the approach and care that should be taken while participating on these platforms.

It has never been more important for our boys, staff and parents to abide by the core values of our school, including a commitment to fairness, balance, accuracy, honesty and very importantly respectfulness. We thus proceed from the assumption that our PBHS community is intelligent, thoughtful and considered in their communication and responsibly reflect the values of our school.

We all need to be mindful of the power at our fingertips and the related dangers and pitfalls of this power.

The information produced on social media by staff, boys and their parents is a reflection of Pretoria Boys High School's community and is subject to the school's:

- Code of Conduct
- IT Policy

We acknowledge that the reach of social media does make it a useful tool for communication and marketing within the school context. However, even when used as a part of official school platforms. It must be subject to guidelines. It is in this light that this policy has been formulated.

## **2. APPLICABLE LEGISLATION INCLUDES, BUT IS NOT LIMITED TO:**

The Constitution

- Rights may be infringed by users of social media
- Right to privacy, right to dignity etc.

The Films and Publications Act 65 of 1996

- Posts on social media constitute “publications”
- This Act regulates the distribution of publications

Electronic Communications and Transactions Act 25 of 2002

- The Act’s objective is to provide for, facilitate and regulate electronic communications and transactions
- It may have narrow application

The Children’s Act 38 of 2005

- This legislation gives effect to children’s right as contained in the Constitution
- Sets out principles relating to care and protection of children
- Defines parental responsibilities and rights

Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and related matters) Amendment Act 32 of 2007

- Regulates child pornography (may be disseminated via social media)
- Sexual relations involving minors

Protection from Harassment Act 17 of 2011

- Social media can be a mechanism to harass someone

Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 4 of 2000

- This Act aims to prevent and prohibit unfair discrimination
- Social media publications can give rise to unfair discrimination

Trademarks Act 194 of 1993

- Trademarks and similar intellectual property vests in the School; those rights are governed by this Act

Copyright Act 98 of 1978

- Copyright may vest in the School which may be infringed via social media

Protection of Personal Information Act 4 of 2013

- Intended to regulate comprehensively the use and management of personal information within the digital environment.

### **3. SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**

Social media refers to all online or mobile applications, tools and services that allow a user to create and publish content. These platforms may use personal profiles (where users post information about themselves) or groups.

Examples of such platforms include: Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Flickr, blogs, WeChat and WhatsApp to name just a few.

Below are guidelines to follow when members of the school community (boys, parents, staff, and administrators) are engaged on social media platforms, regardless of whether these are considered professional or personal accounts.

#### **Digital Oversight Panel**

To this end, PBHS has established a Digital Oversight panel consisting of:

School Public Relations Officer  
School Second Master  
School Headmaster

This panel is responsible for the approving of any items posted on PBHS media platforms.

It will also be responsible for engaging with the necessary social media platforms, assessing complaints and managing the required correspondence on behalf of members of the school community.

Members of the school community are defined as: *boys, parents and staff of PBHS.*

The school Executive Committee will review the Social Media Policy on a regular basis or as may be required.

#### **3.1 The Boundaries of Responsibility**

- Any item posted or shared on a social media platform will be regarded as having the originator and/or person whose account is used, as the author of the item. That individual will carry full responsibility for the item being placed on social media and any repercussions in terms of reactions/responses.
- The responsibility of the school to deal with social media posts will be based on:
  - The content of the post being regarded as offensive as defined elsewhere in this policy.
  - The author of the post being a current pupil or member of staff.
  - The author of the post being readily identifiable as a member of the PBHS community (current staff and pupils) due to one or more of the following:
    - The social media post/s having clear clues as to the PBHS connection (e.g. boy in uniform; filmed at the school etc)
    - The prominence of the author
    - The fact that the author of the offensive item/s was connected to the school by an outside complainant.

### **3.2 Social Media Policy Guidelines and Regulations:**

#### **Use good judgment**

- We expect good judgment in all situations. Behave in a way that will make you and others proud and reflect well on the school.
- Regardless of your privacy settings, assume that all of the information you have shared on your social network is public information.
- For the purposes of this policy all activity online or on social media is deemed public.

#### **Be respectful**

- Always treat others in a respectful, positive, and considerate manner.
- Avoid foul language or offensive terms. In the South African context this specifically refers to any references to race, heritage, gender, sexual orientation and religion.

#### **Be responsible and ethical**

- Because you represent the school, your online activity has a direct reflection on the reputation of the school and those associated with it.
- Users are to discuss only those school-related matters that are within their area of responsibility or knowledge.
- Share and interact in a way that will enhance your reputation, the reputation of others, and the reputation of the school, rather than damage them.

#### **Be confidential**

- Do not publish, post, or release information that is considered confidential or private. If in doubt users are obliged to inquire before posting with the Digital Oversight Panel.
- Use caution if asked to share your birth date, address, and cell phone number or any form of personal information on a social media platform.
- To ensure your safety, be careful about the type and amount of personal information you provide.

#### **Respect private and personal information of others**

- Never share or transmit personal information of boys, parents, staff or associates online.
- Always respect the privacy of school community members.
- Individual school staff members appearing in posts must give permission for the use of these images beforehand.

#### **Post images with care**

- Respect brand, trademark, copyright information and/or images of the school. NO badges, logos and house crests may be used, as they are all copyrighted.

- Do not caption photos with the names of current staff members or boys/families unless permission is granted.
- Do not post photos of boys who are on the “Do Not Photo” list in accordance with the database of the school indicating those who do not permit their names or images to be used online.

### **“Public Interest” posts**

- Where a pupil or member of staff has access to material that is potentially harmful to the image of the school, it is their responsibility to report this to the Digital Oversight panel rather than posting/sharing it on a social media platform.
- It is acknowledged that these types of posts may well relate to actions or attitudes that very definitely need to be dealt with by the school, but in the interests of the school community, the individual, the social responsibility and the educational responsibility, these matters are best dealt with in-house rather than by the court of public opinion.

### **3.3 Definition of Offensive Posts**

#### **Bullying and Intimidation**

- Any form of cyber bullying, whether members of PBHS or not, is strictly prohibited.
- Bullying, includes public shaming, threats, defamation, or making public personal information of an individual, including but not limited to photographs, names or any other form of personal information, including information which may provoke emotional or physical harm to the individual concerned.
- Importantly, personal identification of anyone under the age of 18 is strictly prohibited and deemed to be an aggravating factor in such cases. Such cases must be reported to the Digital Oversight Panel for review and action.

#### **Racism and Discrimination**

- PBHS does not tolerate any form of racism and discrimination.
- All members of the school community are expected to abide by an ethos of tolerance, respect, non-racism, religious tolerance, gender and sexual equality as enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa and related school policies.
- Intolerance and discrimination is strictly prohibited in all forms.

#### **Sexism**

- Any posts which demean or objectify women are unacceptable.
- Gender-Based Violence is a scourge facing our society.
- Any post, which is deemed to encourage, condone or minimise the severity of gender based violence will be deemed to be offensive, unsanctioned and will be considered a serious violation of this policy warranting full sanction.

#### **Other Categories**

- Cruelty to animals

- Pornography
- Politically-motivated posts
- Unruly or antisocial behaviour that brings the school into disrepute

### **3.4 Closed Groups and Anonymity**

Membership of closed groups is permitted.

#### The creation of groups/accounts within the PBHS Community

The policy recognizes that WhatsApp groups provide for a useful means of communication to staff, parents and specific groups of boys. The use of these groups is permissible subject to the following criteria:

- No groups may exist in a PBHS context without a member of staff being a member of the group.
- The member of staff on the group is responsible for monitoring content posted.
- No group or account with an identifiable link to the school may be set up in which a pupil or pupils of the school have the sole administrator rights.
- The platform is primarily intended as a means of communication and not as a social group.
- Posts should not be made after 8pm and before 7am.

However, members of groups/accounts are cautioned in terms of the following:

- Members are encouraged to report violations to the PBHS social media policy and to disassociate with the closed group immediately.
- Failure to report violations of the PBHS social media policy within closed groups will be deemed to be an endorsement of the collective intentions, sentiment and point-of-view of the closed group – resulting in the necessary disciplinary action being taken.
- No distinction will be made between the posts on closed groups and the sentiment of its followers.
- PBHS reserves the right to request information relating to administrators, members and participants of all members, in which failure to supply such information may be construed as obstruction and violation of PBHS's social media policies.

#### Online Friendships and Connections

Staff and Administrators are not permitted to accept online friendship or follower requests from current boys.

### **3.5 Media Inquiries Relating To PBHS**

All members of the school are to refer media inquiries arising from social media posts to the office of the school PR for an official response (after consultation with the Headmaster).

### **3.6 Fact Checking and Errors**

- Members are obliged to have shown due care in determining facts and context before posting. Errors are to be corrected immediately, with the necessary apologies provided to all concerned without delay.
- Factual errors must be reported to the Digital Oversight panel immediately.

### **3.7 Staff Online Protocols**

- Maintain proper professional boundaries with boys, parents and guardians.
- Staff are not to befriend boys on social media platforms.
- All staff posts should be limited to groups (ie. No one-on-one social media contact).
- All formal communication with a group of parents via a social media platform must be language checked within the house system.
- Posts by staff should not bring the school into disrepute and are subject to all school policies.
- Staff should maintain a formal, courteous and professional tone in all communications with the PBHS community.
- Avoid any personal views as these are not necessarily those of the school.

### **3.8 Process of Recourse in the Event of Offensive Items Being Reported or Detected**

1. The matter will be reviewed by the Digital Oversight Panel and an initial report compiled detailing content, reactions etc.
2. The report is presented to the Headmaster.
3. The Headmaster, after possible consultation with members of the school Executive Committee, will decide whether:
  - The incident warrants a SGB hearing or if it can be dealt with under the school's other disciplinary structures.
  - Communication (a school statement) relating to the incident is required.
4. Subsequent communication with school community and/or public to be determined by the Headmaster/GDE.