



**SCHOOL POLICY:
EDUPLEX HIGH SCHOOL**

SOCIAL MEDIA FOR LEARNERS

Date updated: November 2022

1. Introduction and Purpose

Eduplex (“**the school**”) recognises that social media is a very valuable tool for both communication and education. We want all learners to gain every benefit from the opportunities it offers. However, if not used responsibly, social media poses certain risks. The school has a duty to protect itself, and other individuals associated with the school, against these risks.

At the school, we foster an open and expressive environment, and respect every individual’s right to freedom of speech. However, as an educational institution, we feel we must remind all students and parents of their obligations as citizens of South Africa, to ensure that all communications on social media are lawful, do not cause harm and do not infringe on other peoples’ rights (e.g. their rights to reputation, dignity and privacy). Sometimes this may mean that your right to freedom of speech is limited. This is not a limit imposed by the school, but by South Africa’s constitution.

These guidelines apply to all learners at the school and to social media used in both a personal capacity as well as in relation to/association with the school.

2. Definitions

“Social Media”

For purposes of these guidelines, “Social media” means any facility that enables conversations over the internet including blogs, forums, platforms such as Facebook, Google, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, Qooh.me, Live.ly, Music.ly, WhatsApp, YouTube, Gaming platforms (including games on X-box and PlayStation etc.) and any other forms of communication now and in the future classified or generally regarded as social media.

“Adult”

Refers to a parent, teacher, intern and/or guardian.

“Online”

Means on the Internet, on social media applications.

3. Important principles

The following are important principles that learners and their parents/guardians must keep in mind when using social media:

3.1 **Most individuals, whether learners or parents, can be linked with the school, even if they do not list Eduplex as their school or the school their child attends.** This is due to assumptions that can be made from viewing an individual’s social media platforms (e.g. most of their friends attend the school, so it is likely that the individual in question attends the school) or assumptions that can be made from viewing content regarding the individual on another social media platform (e.g. being “tagged” in a school photograph by a friend or by the school). **This means that these social media guidelines and other applicable policies, apply 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (including school holidays), as all individuals associated with the school act as representatives of the school always.**

3.2 **“Digital content is dangerous content”** – as soon as content exists in a digital format (i.e. as a photo, or typed note), it is at risk of being distributed and seen by many other people. Even if content is not posted online, phones are stolen every day, images are backed up to the Cloud (which may get hacked) and screenshots can be taken. Because of this, all digital content is vulnerable, and content that is sent to someone else, or posted, is especially vulnerable, and is essentially out of the creator’s control.

3.3 **Content on social media is “published” content** – as soon as one other person has seen your content on social media (and WhatsApp is a form of social media), in the eyes of the law, that content is regarded as “published” content. This means that you are as responsible for it, as the journalist who puts the headline on the front page of the newspaper.

3.4 **It is a permanent record** - everything you put online is there to stay. Even if the content is deleted shortly after it is posted online, screenshots facilitate widespread distribution of content that is beyond your own control.

3.5 **You are never anonymous online** - even if you use social media under a pseudonym, it is easy to trace the identity and location of an account holder using an IP address.

- 3.6 **It is not private** - there really is no such thing as “private” on social media. Be very careful with posting any personal information that you would not want the public to see. Be particularly mindful of sharing information such as full dates of birth and current locations.
- 3.7 **Chain of publication** - remember that even if you did not create the content, in terms of the law, **you are responsible for any content that you retweet, share, like or are tagged in on social media. Any comments appearing on your posts are also your responsibility, and if you are in a WhatsApp Group, you could potentially be responsible for inappropriate content, even if you didn't post it.**
- 3.8 **Don't air your grievances about the school on social media** – if you are unhappy at any time about any matter related to the school, it is your responsibility to pursue the matter **through the appropriate channels at the school**. Having an issue with the school and taking to social media to vent/air your concerns is not acceptable and is in breach of these guidelines.
- 3.9 **Failure to mention the name of the school/ person does not remove liability for the content that is damaging to the school/ others** – You do not have to mention a name to have identified someone for the purposes of the offence of defamation or crimen injuria (infringement of dignity). If it is possible to “guess” who you are referring to, you are as guilty/liable, as if you had mentioned the name.

4. Appropriate use of social media

To optimise the responsible use of social media, the school encourages and expects that its students adhere to the following practises of good digital citizenship:

- 4.1 You must abide by all the terms and conditions for the social media platforms and facilities that you are using.
- 4.2 Do not give or post your name, date of birth, address, telephone number, or the name, address or telephone number of the school or your parents/guardians, to anyone online.
- 4.3 Be sure to deactivate location tags for all social media applications so that your location is not made available to anyone.
- 4.4 Do not take or send embarrassing photos of your family, friends or classmates to others, unless you have their consent.
- 4.5 Do not say unkind or untrue things about people or use inappropriate language online.
- 4.6 If you have posted a photo of someone else or content which concerns someone else, and that person asks you to remove it, you need to do so immediately.
- 4.7 Do not distribute chain mail and/or fake news. Use available resources to find out if something is true or not.
- 4.8 Do not message, phone, “add” or meet anyone that you have not met face-to-face in real life unless an adult gives permission.
- 4.9 Often, people online pretend to be someone they're not. Even if you have an overlap in friends, or your friends introduce you to someone online, always be careful in establishing that they are who they say they are.
- 4.10 **Immediately tell an adult if:**
 - 4.10.1 You receive suspicious phone calls or messages from people you don't know.
 - 4.10.2 you receive harassing, threatening, disturbing, offensive, illegal or inappropriate content.
 - 4.10.3 You receive any content or if you are part of any conversation (even if you started it) which makes you feel uncomfortable, unsafe, nervous or unsettled.
 - 4.10.4 If someone asks you to send them any pornographic material (like sexy or naked pictures). In such an instance **you must always refuse to send the photographs**, as this could be a criminal offence.
 - 4.10.5 If someone sends you any inappropriate or pornographic material. In such an instance you must not show it or send it to your friends, as this could be a criminal offence.
 - 4.10.6 If you see people doing things or saying things to other people online that you know they are not supposed to do or say.
- 4.11 Do not get into arguments or fights online. If someone tries to start an argument or fight with you, do not answer him or her and tell an adult.
- 4.12 Do not bully, shame, harass anyone or send threatening or hurtful messages to others online.

- 4.13 If you are in a WhatsApp group where other people are doing or saying bad things, you need either to leave the group, or let others know that what they are doing is not right.
- 4.14 Never pretend to be someone else online or create a fake account.
- 4.15 Never give your passwords to anyone but your parents/guardian.
- 4.16 Never use somebody else's phone or log into somebody else's account unless you have their permission.
- 4.17 Do not use something that you found online and pretend that it is yours.
- 4.18 Do not download, buy or order anything online without asking an adult first.
- 4.19 Do not open any suspicious links or attachments.
- 4.20 For any school WhatsApp groups, you must adhere to the WhatsApp guidelines attached to this document as **Annexure A**.
- 4.21 For any emails or email threads relating to school business, you must adhere to the e-mail guidelines attached to this document as **Annexure B**.
- 4.22 You must only use the school logo if you have **written permission** from the Head of Eduplex High School do so.
- 4.23 You may not create accounts that appear to belong to the school, without written permission from the Head of Eduplex High School.

If you are unsure whether you should post content online or have it on your phone, remember the following:

The Billboard Test: If you wouldn't want photos/videos/messages to be displayed on a billboard on the side of a highway with your name and the name of your school, don't post it online and don't let it exist in digital format on your phone/device or somebody else's phone/device (as these can get stolen/hacked).

The 6 Ps: if you wouldn't want any of the following people to see the photos/videos or messages, do not post them on social media or let them exist digitally on your phone/device:
The Police; Your Parents; a Paedophile; a Prospective university admissions officer/employer; Your Principal (the School Head), a Phisher (someone who is interested in accessing your personal information)

Signed at _____ on the _____ day of _____ 20_____

Learner name: _____

Learner Signature: _____

Parent name: _____

Parent Signature: _____