

School Social Media Use Policy Proforma

Rationale for using this policy proforma

This policy proforma supports schools to take an evidenced informed approach to social media use. Built on foundations of [data minimisation](#) and [digital rights](#), the proforma will empower schools to understand and refine existing school social media use to establish and enact [responsible and respectful sharing principles](#) with their own unique school communities.

Development and implementation of a clear school social media policy and procedure in your school offers significant benefits including:

- Reduction of teacher workload associated with school social media by establishing clear guidance and procedures for sharing.
- Development of stronger connections with your school communities by engaging with them to establish clear and understandable procedures for sharing and processes for informed consent.
- Strengthening protections of children's data through responsible and respectful sharing practices that facilitate connection and the sharing of great school stories that minimise student data.
- Establishing and communicating clear standards for the collection, sharing (posting), storage and disposal of student data to the digital and data literacy of students and families.

The policy and procedural guidance in this proforma is designed as step-by-step support and learning development for schools and school communities. This may be used alongside the accompanying resources and professional development opportunities provided by the ARC Centre of Excellence for the Digital Child.

School leaders, teaching and/or administrative staff can work through the proforma and guidance in sequence to consider how best to implement safer, responsible and respectful sharing principles in their own unique school communities. Schools can choose to do this as a whole school professional learning and planning activity. Alternatively, executive teams can drive this work with input from staff and the wider school community.

How to use this policy proforma

This policy and procedure statement is organised in four sections. Each section steps stakeholders through the four Ps of school social media communication - **Purpose, Platform, People** and **Posts**.

Each section sets out approaches for schools to consider and complete/adapt as their own policy.

Instructions and the significance of each policy frame are provided in pink text for schools to consider. Schools may leave, delete or modify for their own audience.

Text in *[box brackets]* indicates that schools are required to insert their own text.

Underlined text indicates an option for schools to consider and select. Schools should delete alternate options once an option has been selected.

Guidance is set out in a pink text box. This guidance is research informed and connects to the Responsible and Respectful Principals for School Social Media Use. Guidance can be removed from your school policy on completion.

Purpose

Strong connections between school and home play a vital role in enhancing students learning and wellbeing. In recent years, social media has emerged as a popular platform for facilitating these connections, offering immediacy, visibility, and promising a sense of community. While the intention is to enhance engagement, the use of social media in school settings introduces complex ethical, legal, and practical challenges that require careful consideration.

Schools have long shared student achievements and learning experiences with families and communities, traditionally through newsletters, assemblies, conversations, and print materials. Schools now use apps and platforms (including social media) to push out real-time updates, showcase events, and curate a public image. These apps include school management apps (e.g. Compass, Sentral), and learning experience platforms (e.g. SeeSaw), which are often used in combination with commercial social media platforms (e.g. Facebook and Instagram).

Social media platforms like **Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube** are particularly appealing due to their visual nature and interactive features. Yet, this shift towards digital forms of communication has led to an increase in the quantity and frequency of children's data being shared online - often in the form of images, names, and locations. While school management and learning platforms often include social interactions and communications, the private or closed setting of these platforms means the associated risks, harms and/or benefits are different from the public sharing of children's data on social media. **This policy focuses specifically on public sharing on social media such as Facebook and Instagram.**

Scope

The policy guides school social media communication and should be used by school leaders, teachers, administration staff, parents, carers and students to promote effective communications through respectful and responsible sharing of children's data on social media.

Policy Statement

Communication between schools, families and the broader community is strengthened when social media is used with clarity, purpose and care. As schools navigate the opportunities and risks associated with public digital communication, it is essential that the use of social media aligns with ethical practice, legislative responsibilities, and a commitment to protecting children's rights and data. This policy is underpinned by the following principles that guide *[Insert school name]'s* approach to social media use:

1. Model responsible and respectful social media use
2. Prioritise intentional social media use balanced with other communications
3. Openly communicate and obtain consent from all involved
4. Minimise personal information when sharing on social media
5. Plan for the life cycle of data generated for social media

The principles aim to promote respectful and ethical practices that honour children's rights and model responsible digital citizenship for children, teachers, parents and carers and the wider school community.

[Optional: Insert alignment with school values or mission]

This policy and procedure statement is organised in four sections stepping stakeholders through the four Ps of school social media communication - **Purpose, Platform, People and Posts.**

Purpose

Consider the purpose of school social media communications. Developing a shared and intentional understanding of the purpose of school social media communications will support the annual planning, workload distribution, data minimisation and targeted creation of posts to achieve school aims of connection and/or promotion while minimising data, protecting children and engaging the school community.

[School name] uses [platform name] to [insert Option A, B or C].

Option A communicate with families of current students and promote the school to prospective families and the broader community; OR

Option B communicate with the families of current students; OR

Option C promote the school to prospective families and the broader community.

The schools' communications on [platform name] will include [Select from below list and add others as necessary]

- Weekly [update required interval] updates of upcoming school events and activities.
- Sharing of past events, activities, teaching and learning.
- Sharing of student work
- Resharing of school community news and advertisements.

Guidance on Purpose

Engaging with parents to enhance their involvement in their children's learning is an important component of the work of schools¹. Many schools use multiple channels of communication to meet the needs or preferences of diverse communities. Multiple channels and duplicated communications have both benefits and challenges.

It is ideal to: (1) have a clear communication strategy where specific platforms, particularly social media platforms, are used for specific purposes, and (2) communicate these purposes to families in an accessible way.

Review the purpose of using social media: Review current school social media posts to reflect the intended purpose of posts. Are they well aligned with the needs of parents and in the best interests of children? Is the information shared about children and other members of the school community necessary or well aligned to the purpose?

Limit duplication of children's data shared: How are children's images and personal information shared on social media? Ensure personal information of children is minimised on social media platforms, for example by removing duplicates or similar images. Cross-posting (duplicating posts across platforms) also creates duplication of the data shared.

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<https://www.aitsl.edu.au/research/spotlights/strengthening-parent-engagement-to-improve-student-outcomes>

Prioritise modes that enhance parent-school communications: In the process of reviewing the use of social media along other channels of communications, schools may explore which modes of communication foster and enhance parent and school two-way communications. Schools should consider how social media communications enhance (or detract from) parent and school communications and children's' learning? Platforms or modes that facilitate sharing of learning and meaningful communications between parents and school should be prioritised.

Platform

Choose social media platforms with intention and clearly communicate platforms used for school communications including their settings and known risks.

[School name] uses [platform name(s)] to communicate with school families and the broader community.

[Platform name and link if desired] is set up as a [insert Option A or B].

Option A closed group viewable to members and the platform itself.

Option B public page viewable to all internet users and the platform itself.

According to the terms of service and/or privacy policy of [Platform name] [insert link to these if desired], information (images, text, affiliations) the school shares on social media platforms is available for use and reuse by the platform once shared.

All information shared on the social media platform can also be accessed, copied, stored, reconstituted and or redistributed by other internet users without any express permissions.

Guidance on Platform

We recommend schools limit social media use to **one platform**. Consolidating to one social media platform will minimise risk, better protect stakeholder privacy and ensure clear impactful communications. Multiple channels can cause confusion and proliferation of data and associated risks.

While some school jurisdictions require or encourage schools to use public social media pages, we strongly recommend that schools consider the use of **closed social media groups**, where possible.

We also encourage schools to consider whether social media is the most effective method for home/school communications and promotions. There are many purpose- built education platforms (which may already be in use within the school) that facilitate connections between schools and home. Use of these platforms can streamline or consolidate the number of communications channels and reduce proliferation of data and risk.

A reduction in the number of digital communication tools used can create a clearer, more consistent connection and enables the promotion of the school to be maintained on a static website. This has the advantage of not sharing children's data directly with platforms.

A reduction in digital communication tools can also better protect children. Once an image is shared on even one channel, control is lost, and sharing across multiple channels means risk is multiplied. A secure parent portal or a single, carefully curated social media channel, is safer and more manageable than a broad, disparate presence across multiple platforms.

People

Consider the people involved in your school social media communications and the associated impacts (both intended and unintended).

Identifying the people involved in social media communications and the associated impacts allows schools to engage all stakeholders and better shape a responsible and respectful whole school approach to communications and governance of school sharing including data generation, sharing, storage and deletion.

[School name] use of *[platform name]* involves school leadership, teachers, parents and/or carers, students and the wider community.

School leadership including the [identify and insert school leadership role responsible for social media communications e.g. Digital Technologies Co-ordinator, Digital Communications leader, Marketing Co-ordinator] are responsible for [Select from below list and add other responsibilities as necessary]

- Communicating the school's chosen social media platform, purpose, policy and procedure with parents and/or carers and students.
- Developing and communicating a whole school approach to sharing that engages all stakeholders and distributes associated workload.
- Periodically [insert period e.g. annually] reviewing the approach to school social media communications and considering whether relevant associated policies should be updated in light of platform changes, legislation and the needs of the school community.
- Promoting and managing consent procedures including liaising with parents, students and teachers to ensure consent is informed, specific and current.
- Managing data for school social media communications including collection, storage and deletion of digital photos and videos.

Teachers and school staff are responsible for [Select from below list and add other responsibilities as necessary]

- Communicating the school's chosen social media platform, purpose, policy and procedure with parents and/or carers and students.
- Understanding and implementing the whole school approach to school social media sharing including *[insert Option A, B and/or C]*

Option A capturing digital images on school devices

Option B authoring posts

Option C engaging students in the authoring of posts

[insert detail about frequency e.g. once a term, according to the school digital communications planner]

- Promoting consent procedure with students and parents to ensure consent is clearly understood.
- Liaising with school leadership to facilitate clear communication between all stakeholders about school social media communications.
- Participating in regular *[insert time period i.e. annual, biannual]* review of capture, storage and sharing practices.

Parents and carers are provided the opportunity to [Select from below list and add others as necessary]

- Provide or withdraw consent for the use of their child's information (digital data) to be shared on social media:

Option A via the annual consent procedure; and

Option B by emailing the school office [*Insert email*].

Option C emailing [*Insert email*] and/or phoning [*insert phone*] the school office directly

- View and access all school social media posts and digital media
- Engage with the school social media page via [*insert engagement types: likes, or comments*]
- Respect other students' and individuals' privacy by not resharing or taking screenshots of school social media posts for reuse
- Engage directly with the school where concerns about the school social media communications including sharing and/or digital consent arise by [*insert contact details*].

Students are provided the opportunity to [Select from below list and add others as necessary]

- Have a say about whether they are photographed or filmed for the purpose of social media sharing. In cases where a parent has given consent for the use of student information, the student should have the right to decline; but a child's assent may not override a parents' choice to decline the use of their child's information on social media.
- Learn about data, safety, ethics and privacy in relation to social media platforms and digital consent via curriculum connected opportunities.
- Learn about the school social media page and the use of their data in age-appropriate language.

Guidance on People

Research shows that many schools feel compelled to adopt school social media to cater for parents' needs. However, research also highlights: parent confusion and concerns about school use of social media leading to breakdowns in communications and frustration, along with increased workloads for teachers and lack of general guidance and understanding about the associated risks and harms to students.

An evidenced informed approach to school social media communications explicitly considers the impacts of online sharing on *all* people involved and includes the purposeful planning of responsibilities and pathways for engagement between all stakeholders. This important work underpins a more positive and participatory approach by making clear and visible the roles and responsibilities of various members of the school community and by setting clear guidelines for acting.

Implementation of education reform at the school level is inherently complex. School leaders operate within dynamic environments in which multiple, overlapping layers of change may align with, or at times compete against, reform priorities. Evidence indicates that effective planning, coordinated implementation, and deliberate capacity-building are critical components of successful leadership during periods of change.

The supporting resources and professional learning provided by the ARC Centre of Excellence for the Digital Child accompanying this document have been designed to address these key components and assist school leaders in guiding reform implementation effectively. These include resources designed for all people involved to support stakeholder engagement in the change.

Posting

Consider the purpose of posts following a purposeful plan that aims to minimise unnecessary workload, and the student data that is generated, shared and stored; better protect digital rights; and promote more positive sharing practices.

An annual social media planner will support your school to minimise workload and streamline and distribute the sharing process while setting clear guidance for what positive posting practice looks like.

[School name]'s use of [platform name] is informed by our [insert frequency e.g. annual or term] social media plan. The social media plan is [Select from below list and add others as necessary]:

- Developed and managed by [insert the name of the staff role responsible]
- Shaped around a class or stage based rotation [insert detail, see planner resource for ideas]
- Engages [edit stakeholders as appropriate - school leadership, teachers, students and parents] in developing an ongoing narrative to celebrate [insert school name]
- Reviewed [insert review period - e.g. annually].

Social media posts comprise both text (in the form of school based narratives) and digital photos and videos. *[Insert school name]'s* social media posts aim to protect students' and our communities' digital rights and promote best practice through positive sharing and posting practice.

Post text

The text in our school social media posts will [Select from below list and add others as necessary]:

- Align with the school's purpose for social media communications.
- Focus on school activities rather than specific students.
- Minimise data about individual students, including by the use of first names only (and then only if required).
- Avoid converging data points (for example, name, age, year group, class).
- Avoid location details during and after events, where posts identify individual or specific cohorts of students.
- Avoid and remove any tagging in posts or comments.
- Avoid the use of hashtags which increase the visibility of content to a broader audience beyond immediate followers. This increases the safety and privacy risks associated with the misuse of children's data.

Photos and videos

When capturing photos and videos for the purposes of social media posts staff responsible will *[Select from below list and add others as necessary]:*

- Use a [insert Option A, or B]

Option A school managed device

Option B staff member's personal device, ensuring that all photos and videos are removed once shared or stored according to the school's storage procedure.

The photos and videos captured and shared in our school media posts will *[Select from below list and add others as necessary]*:

- Focus on quality not quantity. Photos and videos in posts will be kept to a minimum. A social media post should include a maximum of *[insert number]* images.
- In circumstances where the school or school community wishes to share larger numbers of images, these will be shared on *[insert name(s) of schools chosen file share or closed teaching and learning platform]* to enhance the protection of student and others' data.
- Photos and videos will aim to minimise personal data. For example, they will focus on the activity, minimise close-ups of students' faces, be captured from a distance, employ digital tools to obscure identity, and focus on staff or symbolic imagery.
- Photos and videos for social media will only be captured and shared in association with the social media plan.
- Photos and videos captured by the school for use on social media will be
 - Stored in a single secure location on/in *[insert details]* and managed by *[insert the name of the staff role responsible]*
 - Accessed by *[identify who will have access]*
 - Managed in accordance with *[Identify relevant policy or procedure for additional details about storage, access and disposal of student data]*
- Photos and videos shared on social media will be removed after *[insert period to align with department or jurisdiction policy. Where no policy applies we recommend this occurs every 2 years]*. Photos shared on social media are subject to the platform's terms and conditions, despite removal.

Guidance on Posts

Getting clear about what good looks like in school social media communications is a powerful step in supporting all stakeholders.

A positive posting practice allows the school to share and celebrate their stories, protect the privacy of students and the school community and model best practice.

The goal is to shift the narrative from "Look who did this" to "Look at what our students are doing." This subtle shift in perspective focuses shared content online around learning and engagement and maintains positive community engagement, without compromising student safety.

A positive posting practice is grounded in the principle of data minimisation, meaning that the data generated, shared and stored is always considered and minimised. Being aware of the types of personal data generated through posting is an essential first step.

In the context of a photo or video, personal data or information generated includes any detail that could identify a specific student/person. For example,

- **Faces:** The most specific identifier.
- **Full Names:** Captions or visible names on awards, projects, or clothing.
- **School Uniforms and Logos:** These clearly identify the school community a child belongs to, making them easier to locate or target.

- **Specific Locations:** Identifiable school buildings, landmarks, or street signs in the background. Or geo-tagged images that provide exact locations.

With this understanding schools can minimise data at the point of capture. When taking photos intended to be shared online, the information collected by photos should be considered and weighed against the defined purpose for sharing. We can ask ourselves when taking photos: What is *required* for the defined purpose of these photos, and what can be avoided?

For example, if a teacher wishes to share a story about the Year 6 farewell, 75 high resolution front-on digital images of individual students or a long video montage combining this type of data are not necessary for the defined purpose. Instead, 4-5 images could share the decorations, a cohort from a distance and or backs of students engaged in dancing or attending an activity at the event.

When schools take this approach they make it significantly harder for images to be linked to an individual student, reduce the risk of misuse, and make the image less useful in data scraping.

The capture, storage, access and disposal of photos and videos also reduces risks associated with other unintended uses of the data.

A school managed device is the safest approach for the capture and management of student photos and videos. If this is not possible, ensure that staff remove photos and vides from their personal devices within a defined period of time, and do not automatically save them to cloud based photo storage services. All school leaders should check their jurisdiction policy for legal and policy requirements for the capture and storage of photos and videos.

For further details about procedures for managing the lifecycle of an image (more generally and not specifically related to social media use, see Appendix 1).

Policy document record

Version number and approval date

Review date

Policy owner / author / responsible person

Related legislation and system policies

[List relevant legislation and policies according to the school's jurisdiction]

Definitions

Social media platform	Social media is defined as an electronic service whose primary purpose is to enable online social networks and interaction and allow users to link, interact, and post material on the service. Commonly used social media platforms include Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), TikTok, Snapchat and YouTube.
School social media	School social media refers to a school's social media account/s. School social media accounts can include pages and groups used to communicate with parents and the broader community.
Digital data	Digital data is information that is collected, shared or generated with the use of digital technologies or internet-connected devices.
Data minimisation	Data minimisation refers to collecting, processing, and storing only the minimum amount of personal information necessary for a specific purpose. This approach helps reduce risks associated with data handling and enhances privacy protection.
Children's digital rights	The Convention on the Rights of the Child affords children a number of rights. In 2021, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) outlined how these rights apply to children in digital environments. This was a call to action for governments, teachers, parents, and corporations to work together to create a digital world that respects and protects children's rights.
Responsible and respectful sharing principles	Research-Informed Principles to Guide Social Media Use in Education presents a collective stance from researchers and industry bodies on the responsible and respectful use of children's data on social media and online.
Digital literacy	Digital literacy encompasses the knowledge and skills students need to create, manage, communicate and investigate data, information and ideas, and solve problems. Digital literacy involves students critically identifying and appropriately selecting and using digital devices or systems, and learning to make the most of the technologies available to them. Students adapt to new ways of doing things as technologies evolve, and protect the safety of themselves and others in digital environments.

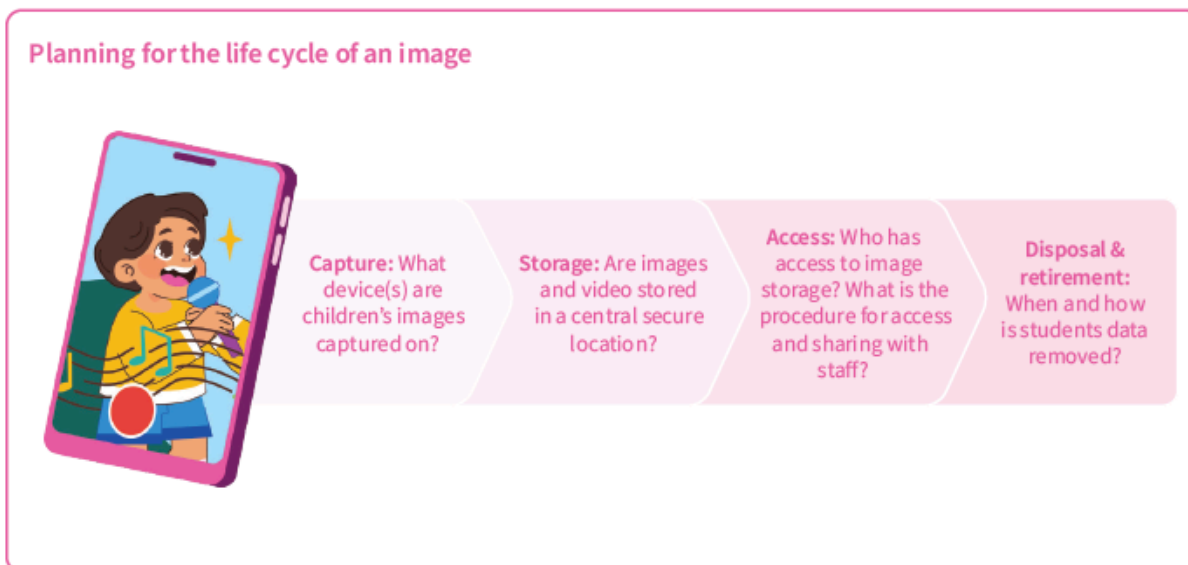
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Appendix 1 Life cycle of an image



Storage of collected images:

Students can remain in educational databases systems for over an extended period of a decade, and as students age, their views about consent and use of their image may change. Therefore, it is not appropriate to use or continue to allow any collected images to remain published over an extended period, and regular image retirement practices are recommended.

Images of staff and students are personal information and should be stored as securely, and in the same ways we securely store would treat someone's addresses, phone numbers, medical information, and or any other personal details.

Storage recommendations:

- Store images in a single, secure location.
 - This may include local servers or cloud-based servers with appropriate protections in place.
- Develop storage location and protocols
 - This helps to reduce staff using personal devices to take and store photos, and their following the clear, established pathways for transferring data to the secure location.

Managing access to images:

Schools are able to be responsible for securing and maintaining data and images responsibly, with appropriate records kept, ensuring this information is stored, shared, and retired in accordance with school or system policies and guidelines. Meeting this expectation requires that only specific individuals with an identified need have permission to access their storage location.

Access recommendations:

- Establish identified staff responsibility for managing access to images
 - This ensures a single source manages and controls access.
- Schedule regular reviews of access permissions
 - This prevents staff that no longer require access from interacting with the stored images.

Respecting image consent over time:

To reduce the risk of older data being improperly used, schools should make efforts to ensure students and parents have full control over their consent and the subsequent use of their data. Regular reviews of appropriate policies and practices are also recommended to ensure these practices are appropriate.

Students can remain in educational databases systems for over an extended period of a decade, and as students age, their views about consent and use of their image may change. Therefore, it is not appropriate to use or continue to allow any collected images to remain published over an extended period, and regular image retirement practices are recommended.

Consent recommendations:

- Regularly review consent policies and practices
 - This ensures changes to consent policy are applied to existing stored images
- Provide and reinforce clear guidance to students, parents and carers about their right to adjust their consent permissions
 - This can be done in age-appropriate ways to obtain student consent and control over the use of their collected images

Image disposal and retirement:

The final stage in the lifecycle of an image is its disposal. Once an image has reached the pre-determined end of its lifecycle, it is no longer required and it's important that it's disposed of correctly. This ensures the image isn't used once it becomes out of date, and protects the school and student from unintentional misuse.

Image disposal and retirement recommendations:

- Dispose of collected images:
 - Images should be retired after 2 years. That means having an established protocol for removing them from digital channels and storage to prevent any possible future use.
 - Keep longer-term data and records in a single secure location, clearly indicating all retired content as not being able to be used and distributed via social media again.
 - It may be necessary to remind staff to delete historic staff and student images from their personal devices, including from photo libraries, archived items, emails

and cloud storage. Regularly remind staff of these obligations at least once per year during regular outlining of appropriate capture and storage protocols.

- Dispose of images posted on social media/newsletters:
 - Newsletters should be retired or unpublished no later than two years after publication.
 - Logs of any social media posts involving personal information personally identifiable data should be created and maintained for visibility
 - Authoring accounts should be empowered to evaluate the benefits and risks of the information being shared via social media against consistent and clear processes.