

## APPROPRIATE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Highfields State Secondary College embraces the amazing opportunities that technology and the internet provide to students for learning, being creative and socialising online. Use of online communication and social media sites and applications (apps) can provide positive social development experiences through an opportunity to develop friendships and shape identities.

When used safely, social media sites and apps such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram can provide positive opportunities for social learning and development. However, inappropriate, or misguided, use can lead to negative outcomes for the user and others.

Highfields State Secondary College is committed to promoting the responsible and positive use of social media sites and apps.

No student of Highfields State Secondary College will face disciplinary action for simply having an account on Facebook or other social media site.

As is set out in the college policy for preventing and responding to incidents of bullying (including cyberbullying), it is unacceptable for students to bully, harass or victimise another person whether within Highfields State Secondary College's grounds or while online. Inappropriate online behaviours can have a negative impact on student learning and the good order and management of Highfields State Secondary College, whether those behaviours occur during or outside college hours.

This policy reflects the importance of students at Highfields State Secondary College engaging in appropriate online behaviour.

### **Role of social media**

The majority of young people use social media sites and apps on a daily basis for college work, entertainment and to keep in contact with friends. Unfortunately, some young people misuse social media technologies and engage in cyberbullying.

Social media by its nature will result in the disclosure and sharing of personal information. By signing up for a social media account, users are providing their personal information.

Students need to remember that the internet is a free space and many social media sites and apps, like Twitter, have limited restrictions placed upon allowable content and regulated procedures for the removal of concerning posts.

Social media sites and apps are designed to share online content widely and rapidly. Once students place information and/or pictures online, they have little to no control over how that content is used. The internet reaches a global audience. Even if students think that comments or photos have been deleted, there can be archived records of the material that will continue to be searchable into the future.

Inappropriate online behaviour has the potential to embarrass and affect students, others and the college for years to come.

### **Appropriate use of social media**

Students of Highfields State Secondary College are expected to engage in the appropriate use of social media. Specific examples of appropriate use of social media sites and apps include:

- Ensuring that personal information, such as full name, address, phone number, college name and location or anyone else’s personal information, is not shared.
- Thinking about what they want to say or post, and how it could be interpreted by others, before putting it online. Remember, once content is posted online you lose control over it. Students should not post content online that they would be uncomfortable saying or showing to their parents’ or shouting in a crowded room.
- Remembering that it can be difficult to work out whether messages typed on social media sites and apps are meant to be funny or sarcastic. Tone of voice and context is often lost which can lead to unintended consequences. If students think a message may be misinterpreted, they should be cautious and make the decision not to post it.
- Never provoking, or engaging with, another user who is displaying inappropriate or abusive behaviour. There is no need to respond to a cyberbully. Students should report cyberbullying concerns to a teacher and allow the teacher to record and deal with the online concern.

If inappropriate online behaviour impacts on the good order and management of Highfields State Secondary College, the college may impose disciplinary consequences for that behaviour regardless of whether the behaviour occurs during or outside of college hours.

Disciplinary consequences could include suspension and/or exclusion. In serious cases of inappropriate online behaviour, the college may also make a report to the police for further investigation. Highfields State Secondary College will not become involved in concerns of cyberbullying or inappropriate online behaviour where the incident in question does not impact upon the good order and management of the college. For example, where cyberbullying occurs between a student of this college and a student of another college outside college hours. Such an incident will be a matter for parents and/or police to resolve.

#### **Laws and consequences of inappropriate online behaviour and cyberbullying**

Inappropriate online behaviour may in certain circumstances constitute a criminal offence. Both the *Criminal Code Act 1995* (Cth) and the *Criminal Code Act 1899* (Qld) contain relevant provisions applicable to cyberbullying.

The Commonwealth Criminal Code outlines a number of criminal offences concerning telecommunications services. The most relevant offence for cyberbullying is “using a carriage service to menace, harass or cause offence to another person”.

The Queensland Criminal Code contains several applicable sections for cyberbullying. Potential relevant criminal offences are:

- Unlawful stalking.
- Computer hacking and misuse.
- Possession of child exploitation material.
- Involving a child in making child exploitation material.
- Making child exploitation material.
- Distribution of child exploitation material.
- Criminal Defamation.

There are significant penalties for these offences.

Highfields State Secondary College strives to create positive environments for all students at all times of the day, including while online. To help in achieving this goal, Highfields State Secondary College expects its students to engage in positive online behaviours.