

## Defamation in Social Media Policy

### 1. Purpose

This policy ensures that all members of the school community—students, staff, and parents—use social media responsibly and do not post defamatory, harmful, or disrespectful content that may damage the reputation of individuals or the school.

### 2. Scope

Applies to all students, staff, and parents/guardians using any form of social media (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp, blogs, forums, etc.) whether posts are public or private.

### 3. Definition of Defamation

Defamation is any false, misleading, or harmful statement made online that can damage the character, reputation, or dignity of another person or the school.

Examples include:

- Spreading false or harmful rumors.
- Posting insulting, offensive, or abusive comments.
- Sharing misleading or manipulated images/videos.
- Publicly criticizing the school, staff, students, or parents in a defamatory manner.

### 4. Policy Guidelines

- The school will conduct annual digital citizenship workshops for students on responsible social media use.
- Staff will receive training on professional online behavior and managing their digital footprint.
- Parents will be invited to information sessions on guiding children's social media habits. All concerns must be raised through official school communication channels, not social media.
- Posting defamatory, offensive, or harmful content against staff, students, or the school is strictly prohibited.
- Confidential school information must not be shared online.
- Cyberbullying or targeted online harassment will not be tolerated.

#### 4.1 Preventive Measures & Age-Appropriate Education

- The school will conduct annual digital citizenship workshops for all students, focusing on safe and respectful online communication.
- FS–Year 3: Students will be introduced to basic online kindness, respect, and safe sharing using age-appropriate platforms (e.g., Class Dojo, Seesaw).
- Year 4–6: Students will learn about misinformation, online rumors, and respectful interaction on learning platforms.
- Year 7–9: Students will be guided on evaluating online content critically, understanding the consequences of defamation under UAE law, and responsible use of apps such as TikTok, Instagram, and WhatsApp.
- Staff and parents will also be invited to training sessions on responsible digital conduct and social media awareness.

#### 5. Grounds for Violations and Consequences

##### For Students

- **Minor Violations** (e.g., offensive comments, sharing rumors without intent to harm):
  - Verbal/written warning.
  - Meeting with parents.
- **Moderate Violations** (e.g., repeated offensive posts, spreading harmful content intentionally):
  - Suspension from school activities.
  - Formal disciplinary record.
- **Severe Violations** (e.g., cyberbullying, defamatory campaigns, severe reputational damage):
  - Suspension or expulsion from school.

##### For Staff

- **Minor Violations** (e.g., inappropriate or unprofessional comments online):
  - Verbal/written warning.
- **Moderate Violations** (e.g., repeated offenses, defamatory remarks about colleagues, parents, or the school):
  - Disciplinary action in line with HR policy.
  - Restriction from representing the school in official events.

- **Severe Violations** (e.g., damaging the school's reputation publicly, harassment, defamatory campaigns):
  - Termination of employment.
  - Referral to legal authorities if required.

#### For Parents/Guardians

- **Minor Violations** (e.g., negative comments in closed groups, sharing unverified complaints online):
  - Meeting with school leadership.
  - Written reminder of school policy.
- **Moderate Violations** (e.g., repeated online complaints, offensive remarks towards staff, parents, or students):
  - Suspension of access to school facilities/events.
  - Formal warning letter issued.
- **Severe Violations** (e.g., defamatory campaigns against staff/school, harassment via social media):
  - Restriction from engaging with school community platforms.
  - Referral to legal authorities as per UAE law.

#### Expanded Parent Cooperation & Responsibility

- Parents are expected to monitor their child's social media activity and use parental controls where appropriate.
- Parents should avoid posting grievances on social media and instead raise concerns via school-approved communication channels.
- Parents must model respectful online behavior and encourage their children to maintain positive digital reputations.
- Device use at home should follow timeouts and screen limits, particularly for non-educational purposes.

#### 6. Reporting & Investigation Protocol

- Any suspected case of defamation or online harassment must be reported to the E-Safety Coordinator or School Management.
- The IT Department will assist in collecting digital evidence (screenshots, links, timestamps).
- A disciplinary committee (SLT, IT, Counselor) will review the case and decide on consequences.
- Severe cases will be escalated to UAE authorities in line with cybercrime and defamation laws.

## 7. Legal Reference

The school reserves the right to pursue legal action under UAE cybercrime and defamation laws for severe cases.

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