



Rice College Social Media Acceptable Usage Policy (A.U.P.)

School Name: Rice College, Ennis, Co. Clare

Address: New Road, Ennis, Co Clare. V95 FV10

Details: Rice College is a Voluntary Roman Catholic Secondary School under the Trusteeship and the Patronage of the Edmund Rice Schools Trust. The School is grant aided by the Department of Education & Skills and is a co-educational school.

School Management: The Board of Management of Rice College is a statutory Board appointed pursuant to the provisions of the Education Act 1998.

Mission Statement:

Rice College is operated according to the religious and educational philosophy of the Edmund Rice Schools Trust Charter (ERST).

We strive to live up to Christian values and show genuine concern for our school community. Our core aims are to provide a broad and comprehensive education and to recognise the needs and develop the talents of each person.

We strive to enrich all those with whom we are privileged to come in contact, we strive to succeed.

Ethos:

Inspired by the vision of Blessed Edmund Rice, the Christian Brother School gives priority to education in a living faith whereby students grow to appreciate the life and mission of Jesus Christ with a view to being committed to the world as he was. Has a special concern for the poor and underprivileged. His aim was to develop a curriculum which promotes the harmonious growth of the whole person.



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Introduction

These guidelines and A.U.P. have been developed to assist all employees of **Rice College, Ennis** in making ethical, respectful and acceptable decisions about their professional and personal social media usage and to provide clear direction on the importance of protecting the School's reputation and confidential information. Social media refers to social and professional networking platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, YouTube, LinkedIn, Snapchat, Instagram, blogs, message boards and forums and other similar online facilities.

The guidelines and A.U.P. are not intended to prevent employees from engaging in social media but are intended to inform employees as to what is considered by the School to constitute appropriate / inappropriate social media usage and conduct. For those employees who are members of the School's teaching staff, the guidelines and A.U.P. give effect to agreed professional protocols as prescribed by the Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers (Teaching Council, June 2012) which provides that teachers should:

“ensure that any communication with pupils/students, colleagues, parents, school management and others is appropriate, including communication via electronic media, such as email, texting and social networking sites.”

and

“ensure that they do not knowingly access, download or otherwise have in their possession while engaged in school activities, inappropriate materials/images in electronic or other format.”

All employees should be mindful of what they post on social media, who can see it and how it can be linked back to the School and work colleagues. Misuse of social media can cause injury to others and can have a negative impact on the reputation of the School. Social media communications are never truly private and once information is published it becomes part of a permanent record.

Employees are **at all times prohibited from using or publishing information on social media which has the potential to negatively impact / reflect on the School and / or its employees and / or its students e.g.:**



- publishing defamatory, abusive or offensive material concerning any employee, volunteer, member of School management, parent(s), student(s), visitor or other member of the School community;
- publishing any confidential or sensitive information concerning the School or members of the School community;
- publishing material that might reasonably be considered to have the effect of damaging the reputation of the School.

The School reserves the right to take disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal, in respect of employees who engage in prohibited conduct and conduct in breach of this policy.

Given the ever developing and changing nature of social media and the internet, the within guidelines and policy will be reviewed and adapted as required.

This policy should be read in conjunction with staff policies which are applicable to social media usage, in particular the dignity at work, Internet AUP, data protection, the Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers and other and disciplinary policies and procedures.

Aims

The aim of this Social Media AUP is to set standards of behaviour for the use of Social Media that are consistent with the values and expectations of Rice College, Ennis. Rice College aims to protect the safety and wellbeing of students, teachers and the school community.

Objectives

The main objectives of this Social Media AUP are as follows:

- Provide guidance for staff on the appropriate use of Social Media.
- Protect the integrity and good name of all members of the school community from online abuse.
- Outline behaviours which are unacceptable and the consequences for these.



Acceptable Usage Policy.

A. Social Media usage on a social media site or profile established in the course of employment which relates to school business / matters.

- i. **Seek permission:** Employees must seek or have permission from the Principal / Deputy Principal(s) before setting up a site or profile relating to School business and or School matters / registering in the School's name on social media sites, user groups, special interest forums and bulletin boards / using social media for teaching and learning purposes.
- ii. **Property:** The property rights in a sanctioned social media account in the name of or on behalf of the School are vested in the School.
- iii. **Responsibility:** A permitted employee is responsible for his/her social media usage, for ensuring that private and confidential information is respected and protected at all times and for compliance with the terms and conditions of the relevant social media platform.
- iv. **Privacy & Confidential information:** Confidential information pertaining to the School, its employees, volunteers, students, parents and others in the School community must be respected and maintained at all times. Personal information about any students, parents, employees or volunteers must not be divulged or discussed on social media sites.
- v. **Unacceptable use:** Employees must not create, publish, download or communicate material/content that could reasonably be regarded as defamatory, inappropriate, discriminatory, offensive, hostile, pornographic, damaging to the School's reputation or referring to a third person without their permission. Uploading, forwarding or linking to the aforementioned content is also unacceptable. Employees must never reveal sensitive details whether relating to the School, its employees, volunteers, students, parents and other members of the School community on social media sites.
- vi. **Behaviour:** Postings by an employee on a social media site that are defamatory, inappropriate, discriminatory, offensive, hostile, pornographic, divulging personal data without consent or damaging to the School's reputation will be addressed pursuant to the School's disciplinary procedure and may result in disciplinary sanction up to and including dismissal.

B. Personal Social Media Usage.

- i. **Boundaries:** Personal profiles are not to be used to conduct school business or to communicate with students/parents. Online interaction with management, other



employees and/or school contacts should be appropriate and professional in nature. Employees must not use the official School e-mail address when participating in personal social media / social media that is not related to the employee's job. Personal use of social media must not occur during working time but is restricted to break times at work.

- ii. **Identity:** Where an employee chooses to identify him/herself on social media as an employee of the School, s/he must make it clear that their communications do not represent the School, its ethos, position, opinions or views. The employee must write in the first person and state clearly s/he is posting in a personal capacity and not in the course of employment or on behalf of the School and state clearly that the views expressed are his/her own and not those of the School. Employees should at all times be mindful of their communications and possible consequences.
- iii. **Be mindful and respectful:** Employees must be mindful that their conduct not only reflects on themselves but also reflects on their professionalism and the School. Employees should exercise sound judgement, common sense and respect when participating in social media. Employees should not use insulting, offensive or disparaging language. If in doubt, don't publish or post anything. Information published online is permanent and never completely private.
- iv. **Responsibility:** Employees are personally responsible for their posts and actions on social media.
- v. **Privacy & Confidential information:** The obligations detailed at (A)(iv) above apply also to employees' personal social media usage. Do not divulge or discuss confidential information pertaining to the School, its employees, volunteers, students, parents and others in the School community and personal information, including photographs, of third persons (including employees, students, parents and other members of the School community) must not be posted, divulged or discussed without the permission of the person concerned.
- vi. **Unacceptable use:** Employees must not create, publish, download or communicate material/content that could reasonably be regarded as defamatory, inappropriate, discriminatory, offensive, hostile, pornographic, damaging to the School's reputation or referring to a third person without their permission. Uploading, forwarding or linking to the aforementioned content is also unacceptable. Employees must never reveal sensitive details whether relating to the School, its employees, volunteers, students, parents and other members of the School community on social media sites.
- vii. **Behaviour:** Postings by an employee on a social media site that are defamatory, inappropriate, discriminatory, offensive, hostile, pornographic, divulging personal data without consent or bring the School into disrepute will be addressed pursuant to the School's disciplinary procedure and may result in disciplinary sanction up to and including dismissal.



Reporting

Employees should immediately report to the Principal / Deputy Principal any inappropriate, abusive or defamatory or other unacceptable social media activity concerning the School, its employees, volunteers, students or other members of the School community. Such reports will be fully and confidentially investigated, the reported activity will be reviewed and, where appropriate, the content will be reported using the relevant online reporting mechanism.

Enforcement

The School will monitor social media usage on School computers, laptops, mobiles, tablets, notebook computers, smartphones, School accounts and School user names. The foregoing IT resources are the School's property and are to be used for legitimate School business. Whilst the School will not specifically monitor social media for references to the School, its employees, volunteers, students, parents and other members of the School community, employees should not expect privacy in this regard.

A reported or suspected breach of this policy is a serious matter and will be investigated by School management pursuant to the appropriate workplace procedure. The School reserves the right to use information that is expressly prohibited by this policy and which comes to School management's attention whether through monitoring or otherwise for disciplinary purposes.

Non-compliance by employees with any aspect of this policy may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

This policy should be read in conjunction with Rice College, Ennis policies, eg. Data Protection Policy, Dignity in the Workplace Policy, Social Media Acceptable Usage Policy and the Child Safeguarding Statement, among others.

Policy Review

This Social Media Acceptable Usage Policy is reviewed on an ongoing basis. The policy is circulated amongst staff and can be viewed on the school website

Approval

This Social Media Acceptable Usage Policy has been approved by Rice College Board of Management



Signed

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Liam Ashe".

Date 8/11/21

Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Louis Mulqueen".

Date 8/11/21

Principal