



Policy Title	Social Media Policy				
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SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

1. PREAMBLE, PURPOSE & STATUTORY LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Operating as an independent boarding school in Limpopo, Stanford Lake College exercises a strict duty of care (*in loco parentis*) to protect the physical, emotional, and digital safety, privacy, and dignity of all learners, staff, and the broader school community. An effective approach to online safety empowers the school to educate, protect, and establish robust mechanisms to identify, intervene in, and escalate digital risks.

Digital risks are categorized into three core areas:

- **Content:** Being exposed to illegal, inappropriate, or harmful material (e.g., pornography, fake news, hate speech, racist, sexist, radical, or extremist views).
- **Contact:** Being subjected to harmful online interaction (e.g., commercial exploitation, adult grooming, catfishing, or unauthorized contact).
- **Conduct:** Personal online behaviour that causes or increases harm (e.g., cyberbullying, non-consensual media sharing, defamation, harassment, or blackmail).

This policy is formulated in accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa and key statutory frameworks governing child protection, data privacy, and digital communications:

1. **The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996):** Balances Section 14 (*Right to Privacy*) with Section 28(2) (*The Best Interests of the Child as paramount*).
2. **Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA) (Act 4 of 2013) – Sections 34 & 35:** Regulates the processing of "Special Personal Information," including photographs, videos, audio clips, and personally identifiable data of children. Minors under 18 lack full legal capacity to authorize the public processing or dissemination of their data/images; express, written parental/guardian consent is mandatory.
3. **The Children's Act (Act 38 of 2005) & Child Justice Act (Act 75 of 2008):** Mandates child safeguarding against digital exploitation and cyber-grooming. Establishes that minors from age 10 possess legal capacity to be held criminally and civilly liable for harmful digital actions.





4. **Cybercrimes Act (Act 19 of 2020) & Protection from Harassment Act (Act 17 of 2011):** Criminalizes non-consensual sharing of intimate images, harmful or threatening digital messages, intimidation, cyberbullying, extortion, and identity theft.
5. **Films and Publications Amendment Act (Act 11 of 2019):** Prohibits the creation, possession, or distribution of Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM), sexualized media involving minors, or cyber-grooming content.
6. **Common Law of Defamation & Contractual Code of Conduct:** Protects the reputation, dignity (*dignitas*), and brand of the school, its staff, and its learners against libel, slander, and public disrepute.

2. SCOPE, RATIONALE & MANDATORY COMPLIANCE

This policy applies to all learners, academic staff, administrative staff, boarding staff, co-curricular coaches, supply/agency staff, volunteers, Board members, parents, and any individual interacting with Stanford Lake College digital environments or referencing the school online. It extends to former employees and alumni where reputational integrity or confidential information is concerned.

MANDATORY COMPLIANCE NOTICE:

Compliance with this policy is **compulsory**. Any breach, contravention, or non-compliance by any individual bound by this policy will be treated as serious misconduct and **will attract formal disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal (for staff) or expulsion (for learners), and potential legal or criminal prosecution.**

This policy must be read in direct conjunction with:

- *Annexure K – Personal Mobile Device Policy*
- *IT Acceptable Use Policy*
- *Staff Code of Conduct & Disciplinary Code*
- *Learner Code of Conduct & Disciplinary Policy*
- *Parent Contract & Conditions of Enrollment*

3. DEFINITION OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media refers to interactive, electronic communication applications, software, and platforms through which users create, share, and exchange information, media, and ideas within virtual networks. This includes, but is not limited to:

- **Networking & Content Platforms:** Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, X (formerly Twitter), LinkedIn, YouTube, Snapchat, Pinterest, Reddit.
- **Instant Messaging & Private Networks:** WhatsApp, Telegram, Signal, Discord, Google Chat, SMS, iMessage.





- **Interactive Web Media:** Blogs, wikis, podcasts, webcams, live-streaming services, and online discussion forums.

All members of the school community must recognize that items posted online—even within private groups or profile settings—exist in the public domain and leave a permanent digital footprint.

4. STRICT SAFEGUARDING & DIGITAL COMMUNICATION PROTOCOLS

To align with *Annexure K (Personal Mobile Device Policy)*, eliminate boundary erosion, and safeguard staff and learners, the school enforces a single approved digital communication framework. Failure to adhere to these boundaries constitutes severe misconduct.

4.1 Approved Staff-Learner Communication Channels

- **Exclusive Channels:** All official digital communications between staff (teachers, Housemasters/Mistresses, coaches, administrative staff) and learners must occur exclusively through official school-issued Google Workspace accounts via **Google Email (Gmail)** or **Google Chat**.
- **Audit Trail:** Google Workspace accounts are centrally managed, archived, and monitored under **Google Vault** and are subject to compliance audits by the Senior Management Team (SMT).
- **Communication Hours:** Standard staff-learner digital communication must occur between **07:00 and 17:30** on school days. Outside these hours, contact is restricted to official emergency channels (e.g., House Duty Phone).

4.2 Prohibited Communication Channels & Boundary Violations

- **Zero-Tolerance Messaging:** Direct messaging, group chats, or personal social media interactions between staff and learners on personal WhatsApp, Telegram, Signal, SMS, Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, Snapchat, Discord, or X are strictly prohibited.
- **Personal Contact Details:** Staff and learners are forbidden from exchanging personal cell phone numbers, private email addresses, or personal social media handles.
- **Friending/Following Restrictions:** Staff members must not accept current learners (of any age) or ex-learners under the age of 18 as friends, followers, or connections on any personal social media account.
- **Disciplinary Action:** Any staff member or learner who violates communication boundaries will be subjected to immediate disciplinary investigation for boundary erosion and gross misconduct.





5. REPUTATIONAL INTEGRITY, MEDIA RIGHTS & POPIA COMPLIANCE

5.1 Protection of School Reputation (Disrepute Clause)

- Learners and staff represent Stanford Lake College at all times, both on and off campus.
- No member of the school community may post, share, publish, comment on, or react to content on social media that brings the school's name, ethos, staff, management, or learners into disrepute.
- **Prohibited Conduct Includes (Subject to Severe Disciplinary Action):**
 - Wearing school uniform, sports kit, or displaying brand logos while engaging in vulgar, illegal, dangerous, or inappropriate behavior on video or camera.
 - Posting defamatory, derogatory, or mocking statements regarding the school, leadership, academic standards, or operating procedures.
 - Tagging or geotagging school grounds or official school accounts in connection with inappropriate online trends or harmful content.

5.2 POPIA Compliance & Media Rights

- **Mandatory Parental Consent:** In accordance with POPIA, no photographs, audio recordings, or video footage of any minor learner may be posted, broadcast, or shared on school platforms or public social media without prior express written consent from a parent or legal guardian.
- **Staff Privacy Rights:** No learner or parent may photograph, record, or film staff members without their explicit verbal and written permission.
- **Invasive Recording Prohibition:** Taking photographs or recordings in private spaces (boarding house bedrooms, changing rooms, bathrooms, sickbays, examination venues) is strictly prohibited. Violations constitute gross misconduct, resulting in immediate disciplinary action and potential reporting to law enforcement agencies (SAPS).

5.3 Extraterritorial Jurisdiction & The "Spillover Effect"

- **Jurisdictional Scope:** While the school does not routinely monitor private off-campus devices or personal chat groups (e.g., private WhatsApp groups), participating in an off-campus chat provides **no immunity** from school disciplinary action.
- **Spillover Disciplinary Right:** If content created in a private, off-campus digital space (e.g., screenshots, memes, voice notes, defamatory texts) leaks into the school environment, causes emotional or psychological distress, disrupts operations, or harms the school's reputation, Stanford Lake College reserves the explicit right to institute formal disciplinary proceedings against all involved parties.





6. SPECIFIC USER GUIDELINES & DISCIPLINARY WARNINGS

6.1 Learner Guidelines

Learners are expected to adhere strictly to digital citizenship standards. **Breaches will result in disciplinary action under the Learner Code of Conduct.**

Learners must:

1. Comply with platform age restrictions (e.g., minimum 13 years for Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat).
2. Adhere to classroom mobile device restrictions: devices are not permitted during the school day except under direct teacher authorization for academic work (per *Annexure K*).
3. Uphold digital etiquette: refrain from cyberbullying, hate speech, harassment, impersonation, or forwarding illicit material.
4. Report digital harm immediately to a Housemaster/Mistress, Tutor, or SMT member without forwarding the harmful content.

6.2 Staff & Teacher Guidelines

Staff members are held to high professional standards. **Breaches will result in formal disciplinary action under the Staff Disciplinary Code.** Staff must:

1. Maintain clear professional boundaries at all times; all digital communication must remain strictly educational.
2. Configure personal social media accounts with strict privacy settings (at a minimum, 'Friends Only').
3. Ensure personal views posted online state clearly that they do not represent the views of Stanford Lake College.
4. Never disclose confidential school information, pupil details, or internal staff discussions.
5. Refrain from responding directly to negative online comments regarding the school; direct all public or marketing queries to the Marketing Department and SMT.

6.3 Parent Guidelines

Parents are expected to support the school's values and code of conduct:

1. Monitor their child's online activity and enforce age restrictions on social media applications.
2. Obtain consent from other parents before posting photos or videos of non-filial learners from school events on personal social media accounts.
3. Avoid airing grievances or internal school disputes on public social channels or unmoderated community WhatsApp groups.
4. Direct official concerns or operational queries directly to the Headmaster or SMT.





5. **Notice of Contractual Impact:** Persistent defamation, harassment of staff or learners, or severe public reputational harm caused by a parent may lead to the cancellation of the learner's enrollment contract under the school's terms of admission.

7. LEGAL LIABILITIES IN DIGITAL SPACES

Under South African Common Law and the Cybercrimes Act, digital users are legally accountable for their online activity:

- **Joint Defamation Liability:** Sharing, retweeting, liking, or commenting affirmatively on defamatory content renders the individual legally co-labile for defamation.
- **Group Administrator Accountability:** WhatsApp or chat group administrators who fail to remove, condemn, or distance the group from unlawful or defamatory posts can be held jointly liable.
- **Defamation & Privacy Violations:** "Name and shame" posts, public allegations, or non-consensual dissemination of personal information constitute actionable legal infringements (*dignitas* and POPIA breaches) that may trigger both school disciplinary procedures and civil litigation.

8. CONTRAVENTION, DISCIPLINARY CONSEQUENCES & ENFORCEMENT

Stanford Lake College takes any violation of this policy extremely seriously. **Any failure to comply with the guidelines, directives, or prohibitions outlined in this policy will result in formal disciplinary action.**

8.1 Disciplinary Action for Learners

Contravention of this policy by a learner will be investigated and processed under the school's Learner Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Policy. Depending on the severity of the offense, consequences may include:

- Official written warnings and demerits.
- Immediate confiscation of electronic devices (in accordance with *Annexure K*).
- Mandatory parent-school disciplinary conferences.
- Formal Disciplinary Hearings before the Disciplinary Committee.
- Suspension from school, boarding facilities, or co-curricular activities.
- **Expulsion** from Stanford Lake College for gross misconduct (e.g., severe cyberbullying, distribution of CSAM or intimate images, major reputational damage, or hate speech).





8.2 Disciplinary Action for Staff

Contravention of this policy by an employee (academic, administrative, boarding, or support staff) will be investigated and processed under the school's Labour Relations Framework and Staff Disciplinary Code. Consequences may include:

- Formal verbal and written warnings.
- Final written warnings.
- Formal Disciplinary Hearings.
- **Summary Dismissal** for gross misconduct (e.g., breach of professional boundaries, gross insubordination, unauthorized contact with minors, breach of confidentiality, or bringing the school into severe disrepute).
- Reporting to professional bodies, including the **South African Council for Educators (SACE)**, and referral to the **National Register for Sex Offenders (NRSO)** where applicable.

8.3 Action for Parents, Board Members, Volunteers & External Parties

- **Parents:** Non-compliance, defamation, or harassment of staff/learners via digital platforms may result in formal legal warnings, restriction from campus and school events, and/or **termination of the learner's enrollment contract**.
- **Board Members & Volunteers:** Breaches will lead to immediate removal from governance roles, revocation of volunteer status, and potential legal action.

8.4 Statutory & Criminal Escalation

Where conduct involves statutory criminal offenses—such as cyberbullying under the Cybercrimes Act, distribution of CSAM, non-consensual intimate media sharing, extortion, or POPIA violations—Stanford Lake College is legally obligated to and **will immediately escalate the matter to the South African Police Service (SAPS), the Information Regulator, or Child Protection Authorities**.

8.5 Monitoring & Device Inspection Rights

As detailed in the *IT Acceptable Use Policy* and *Annexure K*, electronic devices brought onto campus or connected to the school network are permitted on a conditional basis. Where reasonable suspicion of policy contravention, inappropriate content, or digital harm exists, **the school reserves the explicit right to inspect electronic devices in the presence of the owner**, and any retrieved evidence may be used in formal disciplinary hearings or legal proceedings.

