



مدرسة المتحدة الدولية
United School International
The Pearl Island جزيرة اللؤلؤة

Social Media and Social Networking Policy

United School International

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1. Purpose

This policy aims to:

- Set guidelines and rules on the use of the United International School's social media channels;
- Establish clear expectations for the way members of the school community engage with each other online;
- Support the school's policies on data protection, online safety, safeguarding and Public Relations and Publicity Matters.

2. Scope

For the purposes of this document, social media and social networking are considered to include all technologies that allow individuals to communicate and share information, including photos and video. This includes group messaging services (such as WhatsApp) and online gaming platforms (such as Minecraft).

This policy applies to the use of social media for both business and personal purposes, whether during school/working hours or outside these times.

It applies regardless of whether the social media is accessed using:

- School IT facilities and equipment
- Equipment belonging to members of staff and students.
- Any other IT/Internet-enabled equipment

All members of the school should bear in mind that information they share through social networking applications, even if they are on private spaces, may be subject to copyright and are subject to safeguarding and data protection legislation, and parent/guardian permission.

All members of the United School International community must also operate in line with the school's equalities, harassment, child protection, safer recruitment, and online safety and ICT acceptable use policies. Activity must also reflect the school's values, uphold ethical standards and comply with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) guidelines and the school's other policies. All staff are required to read, understand and comply with this policy.

3. Legislation and Guidance

While breaches of this policy will be considered a serious conduct matter which may lead to disciplinary action being taken under the school's Behaviour and Disciplinary policies, inappropriate use of social media or social networking may also result in criminal liability under laws relating to:

- **Confidentiality and privacy** notably the Data Protection Act 2018, General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) 2018 and the **Qatar Personal Data Privacy Protection Law No. 13 of 2016**
- **Equality** including the Human Rights Act 1998, Equality Act 2010 and **Qatar local legislation**
- **Libel, defamation, harassment and breach of copyright and Qatar local legislation**

4. Roles & Responsibilities

Use of official school social media

The school's official social media channels are as follows:

- Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/USI.ThePearl>
- Instagram [United School International \(@usi_thepearl\)](#) • Instagram photos and videos
- LinkedIn <https://www.linkedin.com/company/united-school-interantional>

These accounts are managed by Head of Marketing and Admissions. Staff members who have not been authorised by Head of Marketing and Admissions to manage, or post to, the account, must not access, or attempt to access, these accounts.

All social media posts must be considered for data protection compliance before publication (see **Data Protection Policy**). This includes ensuring no posting of images of students for whom appropriate permissions have not been obtained.

The school's Parent Society also has a Facebook group and Instagram page – this is managed solely by the parents on the society committee, but Head of Marketing and Admissions has admin rights and monitors these channels to ensure they are being used in the appropriate manner.

If you have suggestions for something you'd like to appear on our school social media channel(s), please speak to Head of Marketing and Admissions .

- **Facebook and Instagram (Meta)**

The school will post on Facebook:

- Alerts about changes (e.g. severe weather updates, changes to school hours, staffing updates). This will be an additional alert and will not replace standard communication channels with parents.
- Reminders (e.g., approaching deadlines, events or class activities, reminders about policies/procedures)
- Advertisements for school events or activities
- Job vacancies or requests for volunteers
- Links to newsletters, guidance and factsheets for parents and carers
- Achievements of students and staff
- Photos or posts about school trips, events and activities
- Seasonal greetings and messages about religious festivals
- Invitations to provide feedback
- All material shared will be appropriate to the cultural and ethical standards of the region, aligned with the guidelines set out by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, and aligned with the schools' values and policies.

The school **will not** post on Facebook:

- Anything that the school does not have parental/guardian approval to post

- Names and photos of individuals (unless they have given consent.) Where permission is granted, the names shared will only be first names.
- Harmful or abusive comments
- messages to specific people
- Political statements
- Advertisements for businesses unless directly related to the school
- Links to staff members' personal account
- Surveys that reveal personal information about individuals
- The sale of goods for commercial gain

- **LinkedIn**

The guidelines above, also apply to activity shared via LinkedIn.

Moderation

Staff responsible for our social media accounts will also ensure that all content shared on social media platforms is age-appropriate for the school community.

Staff responsible for our social media accounts will delete as soon as reasonably possible:

- Anything that does not follow the guidelines above, including having the correct parent/guardian permission, complying with the school's values and policies, and following MoEHE guidelines.
- Comments we consider to be spam
- Personal information, such as telephone numbers, address details, etc.
- Posts that advertise commercial activity
- Surveys that have not been approved and where data privacy rights have not been made clear and personal data handling measures have not been considered.

Every reasonable effort will be taken to politely address concerns or behaviour of individual users, following the school's complaints policy. If users are repeatedly abusive or inappropriate, they will be blocked.

Following other social media users

The school:

- Will only 'like' Facebook pages with a non-commercial interest – being 'liked' by the school does not imply endorsement of any kind;
- May follow other users who follow the school – being followed by the school doesn't imply endorsement of any kind;
- add for Instagram or other platforms in use by the school.

Personal use of social media by staff

Please note while we recommend members of staff make their private social media profiles unidentifiable to students, we understand many staff will use social media sites including LinkedIn for professional purposes. Staff on personal social channels should respect the school's values, and cultural and ethical standards of the region.

The school expects all staff (including governors and volunteers) to consider the safety of students and the risks (reputational and financial) to the school when using social media channels, including when doing so in a personal capacity. Staff are also responsible for checking and maintaining appropriate privacy and security settings of their personal social media accounts.

Staff members will report any safeguarding issues they become aware of.

When using social media, staff **must not**:

- Use personal accounts to conduct school business.
- Accept 'friend requests' from, or communicate with, students past or present.
- Complain about the school, individual students, colleagues or parents/carers.
- Reference or share information about individual students, colleagues or parents/carers.
- Post images of students
- Express personal views or opinions that could be interpreted as those of the school.
- Link their social media profile to their work email account.
- Use personal social media during timetabled teaching time when required in a professional capacity, personal social media accounts should not be used.
- Share personal information such as telephone numbers, addresses, birthdays, etc.
- Any concerns regarding a member of staff's personal use of social media will be dealt with in line with the staff behaviour policy. Any material shared that raises a concern will be asked to be deleted.

All communications between staff and parents or students must take place via official school channels.

Any communication received from current students (unless they are family members) on any personal social media accounts will be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or member of the senior leadership team immediately.

Staff should not have contact with past students via personal accounts (if ongoing communication is required, this should be done via official school channels).

Any concerns regarding a member of staff's personal use of social media will be dealt with in line with the **Staff Code of Conduct**.

Personal use of social media by students

The school encourages students to

- Be respectful to members of staff, and the school, at all times
- Be respectful to other students and parents/carers
- Align material with the school's values, school policies, and MoEHE guidelines

- Direct any complaints or concerns through the school's official channels, so they can be dealt with in line with the school's complaints procedure

Students **should not** use social media to:

- Complain about the school or bring the school into disrepute;
- Complain about individual members of staff or other students;
- Make inappropriate comments about members of staff, other students or parents/carers;
- Post images and/or audio, including those generated by ai, of staff or other students without their permission.

Any concerns about a pupil's social media use will be dealt with in line with the school's Behaviour and Online Safety policies.

Personal use of social media by parents/carers

The school expects parents/carers to help us model safe, responsible and appropriate social media use for our students.

When communicating with the school via official communication channels, or using private/independent channels to talk about the school, parents and carers should:

- Be respectful towards, and about, members of staff and the school at all times
- Be respectful of, and about, other parents/carers and other students and children
- Direct any complaints or concerns through the school's official channels, so they can be dealt with in line with the school's Concerns and Complaints Policy.

Parents/carers **should not** use social media to:

- Complain about individual members of staff, other parents/carers or students
- Complain about the school
- Make inappropriate comments about members of staff, other parents/carers or students
- Draw attention to, or discuss, behaviour incidents
- Post images of children other than their own

Every reasonable effort will be taken to politely address concerns or behaviour of individual users, following the school's complaints policy. If users are repeatedly abusive or post inappropriate content that affects the school's community and policy, will be blocked by the designated moderator.

WhatsApp and similar messaging platforms can provide quick and effective communication among groups, such as parents in a class. Parents/carers should follow the same social media guidelines (above) when using WhatsApp groups.

Parent Groups (WhatsApp, Facebook and Instagram)

We expect parents/carers to follow the above social media guidelines when using group channels including class WhatsApp groups, the USI Parent Society Facebook group, and Instagram page.

5. Monitoring of and Access to Social Media

USI reserves the right to monitor, intercept and review, any and all activities using our IT resources and communications systems, including, but not limited to, social media postings and activities, for legitimate business purposes. This includes ascertaining and demonstrating that expected standards are being met by those using the systems, and for the detection and investigation of unauthorised use of the systems (including where this is necessary to prevent or detect crime).

By using the school's IT resources and facilities, all members of the USI community and other visitors give the school consent to monitor their activities. All should be aware that their use of social media and any information published by them may be monitored and reviewed.

USI reserves the right to disable social media traffic on key networks within the school where the use of social networking is not appropriate, such as wi-fi and wired networks used for teaching.

6. Reporting

Concerns about breaches of this policy should be sent to the Principal. Details of the investigation process and potential outcomes are set out in the Online Safety Policy.

7. Training and Awareness

This policy will be shared with new staff during their induction period, and the Head of Marketing and Admissions will also run a training session on the school's use of social media at the start of each academic year.

All staff receive regular online safety training, which includes the use and risks of social media, as part of their CPD and mandatory training plan. New staff receive online safety training, which includes the use of social media, as part of their induction, completed within the first 3 weeks

To support students and parents, the school will raise awareness about the appropriate use and potential risks of social media, and provide regular information through:

- curriculum-linked activities
- communications (e.g. letters, newsletters, website, learning platform)
- parent sessions, workshops and events
- campaigns (e.g. Safer Internet Day)
- signposting to trusted resources (e.g. saferinternet.org.uk, childnet.com)
- providing information and resources to support online safety at home

8. Monitoring and Review

Working with the **IT Manager and Designated Safeguarding Lead**, the Principal will monitor the implementation of this policy and ensure it is updated to reflect the needs and circumstances of the school and the social media channels and tools available to users.

This policy will be reviewed each year.

On behalf of the Board, the Regional Head of Schools is responsible for approving this policy.

Executive Principal and Head of Marketing and Admissions will monitor the implementation of this policy, including making sure that it is updated to reflect the needs and circumstances of the school, and a new MoEHE guidelines.

9. Related Policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

- Safeguarding & Child Protection policy
- Acceptable Use of IT, Online Safety Policy
- Behaviour Policy and Anti-Bullying policy
- Staff Behaviour/ Code of Conduct
- Mobile Phone Use policy
- Policy on Public Relations and Publicity Matters