

**How to Guide:**  
**Social Media**

## THE FOLLOWING GUIDELINES MAY HELP P&CS UNDERSTAND THE BENEFITS AND RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH SOCIAL MEDIA.

### P&C SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS

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Social media sites, including Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn, can be effective communication tools to promote parent engagement, build community and promote the excellent work P&Cs do to give every child every chance in education and in life.

Reputation management and careful planning are key components to establishing effective social media accounts.

Whether your school has its own social media or not, the principal may grant approval for the P&C to establish its own social media account/s. P&C members responsible for these accounts should familiarise themselves with the Queensland Department of Education's social media policy, along with this P&Cs Qld social media guide.

Ultimately the responsibility for your P&C's social media presence will rest with the P&C and not the school.

Many P&Cs will have obtained permission from their principal to establish separate P&C social media accounts. These accounts can be a valuable communication tool for promoting P&C and school activities, sharing relevant parent information and for thanking and recruiting volunteers. They are also useful for seeking parent input with the use of functions such as polls and surveys.

### PARTNERING WITH THE SCHOOL

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As well as having their own social media presence, or instead of their own social media, P&Cs should work with school leaders to share information via the schools' established social media channels and websites. A P&C can supply information or promotional messages to the principal, or principal's delegate, and request that it be placed on the school's website or school social media account.

The principal is responsible for a school's social media; therefore she/he determines if the content supplied for the school's official social media is suitable and of interest to the school community.

School social media is a good way to engage more community members who are not already connecting with the P&C.

### PERMISSION, PHOTOGRAPHS, AND VIDEOS

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Due to privacy and consent reasons P&Cs must not upload photos of school staff or students to any social media site without the written consent of the people in the photos – **see *Image Consent Form in Appendix 1***.

All Queensland state schools adhere to strict privacy and consent procedures. Schools obtain permission from parents and carers prior to photos and videos of students being posted on official school channels. This is done via the State School Consent Form which covers only official school platforms (e.g. the school's website and its social media accounts). It does not cover P&C social media channels.

A P&C can work with a school to have photos and videos placed on the school's website or social media sites, ensuring appropriate departmental consent is in place and that students' full names are not published in accordance with departmental policy. The P&C can then share the content on their own social media sites.

## ACCOUNT SET UP

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Before establishing a social media account, it is important you discuss the scope, audience and content of the site with the school principal. P&Cs should read the *Terms and Conditions* for each social media site before setting up accounts. Facebook accounts should be established using the Business/Brand or Community/Public Figure section.

As per Facebook's *Terms of Service*, a legitimate profile must be attached as admin to any business page. Either an already established profile could be used or a 'work' one could be created in a person's legitimate name. On Twitter and Instagram, consider using a generic email address as your login so multiple people can have access to the account. When establishing any social media accounts please set the '**Profanity Blocklist**' to strong and add in words you feel are applicable.

## PASSWORDS AND HANDOVER

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Passwords should be created using a mixture of letters, numbers and characters and should be updated regularly. Passwords to social media accounts and associated email addresses should also be changed if an administrator steps down or leaves the P&C.

If administrators are using their personal accounts to manage official Facebook accounts their access should be immediately removed if they step down or leave the P&C. Using different passwords for separate systems are two simple habits that can help you stay secure online.

The P&C Secretary should maintain an accurate record of all social media accounts, including usernames, administrators, and linked email accounts so that handover is clear and efficient, and administrators and passwords can be changed ASAP.

## PROMOTION

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Consider how you will get individuals to 'like' or 'follow' the P&C social media accounts. Ask your principal if you could promote them through the school newsletters and website.

## BUSINESS ENDORSEMENT

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P&Cs should NOT promote businesses or business initiatives on their social media site as it may infer endorsement.

## ADMINISTRATION HOURS

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Social media is a 24-hours a day, seven days a week medium. Accounts like Facebook need to be monitored after hours, on weekends and on public holidays. One or more P&C members must be assigned to take responsibility for this. If the P&C volunteers cannot commit to monitoring sites, then social media is not recommended. Please consider more suitable promotional avenues such as your school website and official school social media.

## COMMUNICATION WITH STUDENTS

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P&Cs QLD has adopted the Department of Education's standard of practice which states direct messages cannot be sent to students. P&Cs MUST NOT use personal social networking sites, including Facebook, Snapchat, and /or Instagram, to contact or access students enrolled in any state education facility. Students over the age of 16 can 'like' or 'follow' the P&C's social media pages, but P&Cs must not send them direct messages or tag them in posts, images and comments.

## PAGE RULES

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Social media platforms usually have an 'about' or 'bio' section where you can add a little blurb about who the association is and what you do. This is an ideal spot to not only describe your P&C's ethos but also to establish some page rules. For example:

*This page was established for the parents and community of XXXX State School to share information and updates related to P&C businesses and events. At XXXX State School the P&C run the tuckshop, uniform shop and OSHC and various fundraisers throughout the year. Posts are monitored by volunteers and, as such, may not be monitored 24/7.*

*If you have an urgent query, please contact the school directly. Any comments deemed inappropriate will be removed. Comments that contain abusive, vulgar, offensive, threatening, or harassing language, are inflammatory, derogatory towards a person or group of people, are personal attacks of any kind or offensive terms that target particular individuals or groups will be removed without notice. Any subsequent comments containing such content by the same user will also be removed and the user will then be blocked. Comments that are off topic, duplicates of an earlier post, overtly promotional in nature or flagged as spam will be removed.*

*To protect your personal privacy and security, please do not post any material that contains your contact information or other personal information. Posts containing such material will be removed. Please remember this is the P&C page and the content reflects P&C-related topics. If there is a school-related topic you would like to discuss, then please contact the school administration.*

## POSTS

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Posts are the key element to a social media site. They can help you connect with your audience and reflect the vibrancy of the P&C. Try to post regularly but work by the rule 'quality over quantity'. Think about the tone of posts, make them positive, open-ended, inclusive and friendly and take the opportunity to engage your audience in a discussion.

**Good example:** "Parents, come along to the next P&C meeting and help us do great things for the school!"

**Bad example:** "Next P&C meeting Tuesday. If there aren't enough attendees fundraising events will be cancelled."

To ensure your content looks professional and is engaging, make use of free design sites such as Canva.com and source free stock images at sites such as pexels.com or pixabay.com. Short videos taken on your phone and edited in iMovie can make great content. Work closely with your principal to plan how you will politely respond to controversial comments. One option is to invite the individual to meet with the appropriate contact person at the school or P&C to discuss the issue further. It's important that the online responses stay neutral and don't become personal.

Be transparent but always check you aren't releasing information that is sensitive, confidential, protected under privacy laws or not already in the public domain. If in doubt seek advice/permission from the principal or wait for the school to publicly release the information and then share their post. In the case of crisis management, always consult the principal.

P&Cs should take care not to upload material that infringes existing copyright or other intellectual property rights.

## COMMENTS

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Social media is a two-way communication tool, not a broadcast tool. Pages should be set to allow comments and enquiries from the public. The comment function on Facebook and Instagram cannot be disabled.

Although there is a function in Facebook's settings that says, 'disable posts to the page', this will not stop comments being made under status updates and photo uploads. Hiding all comments and not responding can make your audience think you are ignoring or censoring them. There is an expectation of customer service when using social media.

If someone posts negative or inappropriate content on the P&C's page, you should not delete it as this may make the situation worse. Instead, hide the post and contact the individual to explain why the post is hidden (for example, it identifies a student or discusses a sensitive subject) and respond on the page with the best avenue to further discuss the issue to achieve a positive outcome for all parties. It is important the P&C keep a record of all posts and responses. If you have hidden an offensive comment, please take a screenshot as a record immediately in case you need to refer to it later.

## CYBERSAFETY AND REPUTATION MANAGEMENT

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The Department of Education has a dedicated Cybersafety and Reputation Management Team, which provides direct support for all Queensland state schools when responding to concerns of inappropriate online behaviour and misuse of digital technology which are impacting the good order and management of the school.

For assistance contact the Cybersafety and Reputation Management team on (07) 3034 5035 or [Cybersafety.ReputationManagement@qed.qld.gov.au](mailto:Cybersafety.ReputationManagement@qed.qld.gov.au) The team can also be followed on Facebook at: <https://www.facebook.com/QEDCybersafetyAdvice/>

## RISKS AND MITIGATION STRATEGIES

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The Department of Education's Information and Technologies Branch suggests the following risks and mitigation strategies need to be considered when planning and establishing a P&C social media account. Delays in responding to and/or removing inappropriate posts may allow key stakeholders (parents) to view and contribute to inappropriate posts and be aware of their removal by site administrators.

Constant monitoring and responding to requests in a timely manner would require the social media site administrators to monitor the site continuously, compose responses, seek approval of the principal when appropriate and then post a response. P&Cs need to consider and document perceived risks and list their potential mitigation strategies. All activity needs to be considered as public, acknowledging that nothing is ever completely removed from the internet. Be aware that Facebook advertisements could be seen as being endorsed by the school/P&C.

## PRIVACY

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P&Cs are bound by section 426 of the Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 (<http://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/LEGISLTN/CURRENT/E/EducGenPrA06.pdf>). This provision deals with confidentiality of student information. It is an offence for P&C members to make a record of, use or disclose personal information about a state school student (current, prospective, or former) except in the certain circumstances provided for in s 426. P&Cs may need to seek their own legal advice in relation to this.

## P&C SOCIAL MEDIA ESTABLISHMENT CHECKLIST:

The Queensland Department of Education's Social Media Procedure recommends P&Cs use the school's already established social media sites or website. If your school does not have an established social media site and the principal approves the P&C establishing an account, this checklist highlights best practice and ongoing responsibilities in relation to establishing and maintaining these accounts.

Please circle 'yes' or 'no' to the following questions to assess suitability		
Have you discussed establishing a P&C social media site with the school principal?	Yes	No
Have you considered asking the principal if you can supply P&C information/messages to be placed on the school website or the school's Social Media platforms instead of establishing new social media accounts?	Yes	No
Social media accounts like Facebook need to be monitored after hours, on weekends and on holidays. Do you have one or more P&C members prepared to do this?  <i>P&amp;Cs should diligently monitor all accounts and immediately hide any offending posts. Posts from businesses should also be removed as they infer endorsement by the P&amp;C and by inference the school.</i>	Yes	No
Do you have a generic email account that can be used to establish the Social Media account, accessible by a range of individuals who can act as site administrators?	Yes	No
Have you ensured no photos of students or school staff will be uploaded to the accounts?  P&Cs should work with the school to have photos placed on the school website ensuring appropriate consent is in place and students' full names are not published in accordance with departmental policy.  <i>Refer to Permission, Photographs and Videos section on Page 1.</i>	Yes	No
Has the P&C ensured that the privacy of students, their parents/carers and staff are not compromised by the initiative?  <b>Note:</b> P&Cs are bound by section 426 of the Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 (Qld) <a href="http://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/LEGISLTN/CURRENT/E/EducGenPrA06.pdf">www.legislation.qld.gov.au/LEGISLTN/CURRENT/E/EducGenPrA06.pdf</a> . <i>This provision deals with confidentiality of student information.</i>	Yes	No
Have you established:  Who will write the posts? The correct tone for the posts and type of messages you want to post? Who will approve the posts? (Generally, it's the P&C president)	Yes	No
Have you considered:  How you will respond to posts – negative and positive? Who will give approval to respond to these posts? (Generally, it's the P&C president or, if sensitive, the principal)	Yes	No
Have you ensured no content (intellectual property, music, TV or film footage) will be uploaded without explicit approval from the content/copyright owner?	Yes	No
Have you ensured ALL administrators have read and understood this Social Media Guide?	Yes	No

APPENDIX 1 – IMAGE CONSENT FORM

<School/P&C Logo here>

## Consent for use of images on P&C Social Media platforms

Do you consent to <school name> P&C using your image on the P&C's social media platforms?

I GIVE MY CONSENT

Details	
Name of individual:	
Address and email/phone contact of individual:	
Name of organisation/etc:	

*These images will be utilised by <school name> P&C for a period of no more than five (5) years.*

Signature:	
Signature of the individual (if over 18 years of age, or under 18 years and capable of understanding and giving consent)	Date:
Signature of the parent/guardian (required if the individual is under 18 years of age)	Date:
Name of signing parent/guardian	
Address of signing parent/guardian	