# LINKS

# Managing social networking incidents

The way people communicate via social networking can be an issue for schools. Facebook is the most popular social networking site at present, however, there are others such as Twitter, LinkedIn, MySpace, Ning and Orkut. Parents are expecting principals to stop conflict, bullying and harassment of students via social networking even though it often takes place outside school hours. The duty of a school to its students is not necessarily measured or limited by the fact that the bell has rung and students have left school grounds.

**What can principals do about it?**
Principals can deal with this behaviour provided there is a clear and close connection between the school and the conduct of students. Principals act on cyberbullying in the same way they would manage bullying or harassment in the classroom or playground under the school's discipline or anti-bullying policies. Where warranted this could include disciplinary action.
(See Student Discipline on the Student Welfare Directorate intranet site:
https://detwww.det.nsw.edu.au/lists/directoratesaz/stuwelfare/studiscipline/index.htm)
An effective response to bullying behaviour requires a partnership between parents, students, education providers and others. The *Bullying: Preventing and Responding to Student Bullying in Schools Policy* focuses on protection, prevention, early intervention and response strategies for student bullying.

**Managing Facebook incidents**
Students may make comments on Facebook that go against the agreement they have with Facebook. Principals should be aware of the following aspects of the Facebook agreement.

Facebook users must not:
- be under the age of 13 years
- provide false personal information or create an account for anyone else without permission
- create more than one personal profile share passwords, let anyone else access your account or do anything that may jeopardise the security of your account
- upload viruses or other malicious code
- solicit login information or access an account belonging to someone else
- bully, intimidate or harass any user
- post content that is hateful, threatening, pornographic, incites violence or contains nudity or graphic gratuitous violence
- do anything unlawful, misleading, malicious or discriminatory
- tag users or send email invitations to non-users without their consent
- post content or take action on Facebook that infringes or violates someone else's rights or otherwise violates the law
- post anyone's identification documents or sensitive financial information
- facilitate or encourage any violations of the agreement.

Facebook can disable an account or remove any content or information if they believe it violates the agreement. Once an account has been disabled users must not create another account without the permission of Facebook.

The entire Facebook agreement can be located at http://www.facebook.com/terms.php .

**What should happen when a student reports to the principal that they are being harassed on Facebook**
1. View the transcript of what has been posted.
2. Identify the person who has engaged in that behaviour.
3. If it is threatening or inciting violence, notify local police and the School Safety and Response hotline.
4. Determine if it is school-related.
5. Retain a copy of the comments page (if possible).
6. Contact parents of the students concerned.
7. After speaking with the Police (where the incident has been reported to them) instruct the student who has engaged in that behaviour to remove the posting.
8. Advise the student who has complained to block the offender.
9. Engage the school's anti-bullying policy where appropriate. This could include taking appropriate disciplinary action against the offender(s) if it is school-related.
10. Ensure the student who is the subject of the behaviour (or his or her parents) reports the harassment to Facebook.
11. Provide support for the victim.

**Reporting an offensive comment on Facebook**
Only people with a Facebook account can report offensive material. To report a comment:
1. Run cursor along the comment, level with name until an 'X' appears in the top right corner of the comment.
2. Click on the 'X'.
3. Click 'Report post or spam"
4. Click 'Report it as abuse'
5. Make selection and continue.
6. In the 'What you can do box' make the appropriate selection and ensure you click 'Report to Facebook' before continuing.

**Advice for students who are attacked on Facebook or other sites**
1. Don't respond. Bullies like getting a response.
2. Tell someone. Use Facebook's Trusted Friend tool to send a copy of the abuse to someone you trust and who can help. This also generates a report to Facebook.
3. Document or save the content as it may be needed as evidence.
4. If you are feeling upset – talk to someone about how you are feeling. If you want to do this anonymously contact the Kids Helpline.

**A false Facebook profile has been set up in a teacher's name**
Report the fake profile to Facebook.

- Click on "Report/Block this Person" on bottom left of the profile
- select "Fake profile" as the reason and add relevant information.
- Print the false profile page and save its contents.
- Consider whether it is necessary to advise EPAC
- If the teacher is feeling upset they should be offered support eg counselling

**A "goss" page has been set up using the school's name**
"Goss" (or gossip) pages tend to be set up by students or ex-students and can generally be viewed by anyone. Offensive material on these pages should be reported through the reporting feature on Facebook.
1. Keep a copy of the page. If it is possible that a criminal offence has been committed contact the police and seek their advice before further action is taken.
2. If the administrator of the page is identified as a student, instruct the student to remove the page immediately.
   If there is a clear and close connection between the school and the conduct of students implement the school's discipline, welfare and bullying policies.
3. Take disciplinary action against identified students who post bullying, threatening or offensive comments or material.
4. Notify parents of all students involved in posting inappropriate or offensive comments.
5. Provide welfare support to any students involved.

**Staff subject to cyberbullying**
It is an offence to harass or threaten someone via telephone, email or other forms of electronic messaging. Where a staff member endures ongoing harassment or fears for their safety they should report it immediately to local police. Staff subjected to cyberbullying should:
- Provide a copy of the page to police
- Report the incident to Facebook
Principals should:
- Notify the School Safety and Response hotline (if school related)

- Consider taking disciplinary action against a student who has engaged in that behaviour.
- Provide support to the staff member concerned

The Department cannot shut down an external website. Principals will be required to contact the site host (eg. Facebook) about actions that can be taken.
Refer to : Legal Issues Bulletin No.42: *Legal issues arising for staff subject to cyberbullying and related behaviour.*
Information regarding defamation can be found in Legal Issues Bulletin No.34 or by contacting Legal Services on 02 9561 8538.

Occasionally principals and staff receive abusive or offensive emails sent to their departmental address. Abusive emails can be forwarded to Abuse@det.nsw.edu.au so the offender's address can be blocked.

**Educating young people about the use of social networking sites**
Digital Education Revolution NSW focuses on digital safety and digital citizenship, including: keeping safe online, understanding and dealing with cyberbullying, privacy and password security and the ethical and responsible use of technology.

Resources and information for students, parents and teachers has been provided by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA). Materials can be located at http://www.cybersmart.gov.au/ .

The School Liaison Police officer (SLP) or police Youth Liaison Officer (YLO) may be available to speak to students about the legalities of using social networking sites.

All schools should have a policy for the use of mobile phones at school. This could be expanded to include the use of social networking.

Additional information can be found at:
Bullying. No way! Website:
www.bullyingnoway.com.au/
Childnet International www.childnet.com
Connect Safely www.connectsafely.org

**Reporting inappropriate comments on Ratemyteachers.com**
1. Flag the comment by clicking the 'Flag rating' box on the right side of the comment.
2. Read the 'Rules'.
3. Provide a reason for flagging the comment.
4. Submit 'Flag rating'.