

# South African Board of Jewish Education Social Media Policy for Staff

(June 2017)

## 1. Introduction

The South African Board of Jewish Education (SABJE) recognises the evolution of social media as a mechanism of communication in education and a mechanism of communication in our daily lives. It has become an important and powerful tool from which huge benefit can be derived. However, if social media is not used responsibly, it presents huge risks to individuals and organisations. The negative consequences of social media use can have long-lasting repercussions. To optimise the responsible use of social media the SABJE encourages and expects that its staff use social media in adherence with appropriate and acceptable practices governing such use.

While the SABJE facilitates an open and expressive environment and respects the right to free speech, it also recognises the obligation of all citizens to ensure that communications are lawful and do not cause harm to third parties.

Wherever SABJE is used in this policy it refers to the employer yet all requirements of this policy apply both to the SABJE as well as King David Schools.

## 2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to govern the use by SABJE employees of any personal or official social media platforms in any communications, whether these platforms are enabled by SABJE or by third parties, and whether the communications are regarding SABJE or otherwise.



### 3. Scope

This policy applies to all employees of SABJE and all users of SABJE's information and information systems. It also applies to the expression of opinions or comments by SABJE employees on any personal or official form of social media. This policy supersedes any previous policy.

### 4. Glossary of terms

For purposes of this policy "**social media**" means any facility for online publication and commentary, including, without limitation, blogs, wikis and platforms such as Facebook, Google Plus, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter, Flickr, Whatsapp and YouTube, and any other forms of communication that may now and in the future be classified or generally regarded as social media.

### 5. Policy Statements

- The SABJE recognises the opportunities and challenges provided for communication by social media platforms for employees.
- The SABJE's policy is to encourage employees to use social media responsibly.
- The SABJE's policy is to empower users of SABJE's information, systems and third party information systems facilitated by social media platforms, to understand both the benefits and potential risks related to using social media, so that they may enhance their use and avoid or mitigate the associated risks.
- The SABJE also recognises that the evolution of social media is occurring at an unprecedented rate and that this policy will therefore need regular review to ensure that it remains relevant, assists in the governance of the use of social media by employees and facilitates the continuous education of educators.
- It is noted that a policy such as this strives to protect both employer and employee by providing clarity for all parties.

## 6. Guidelines for engaging in Social Media in a Personal Capacity

- The SABJE respects the rights of all employees to freedom of expression and does not object to or discourage the use of social media in a personal capacity. Equally, the SABJE has an obligation to protect its other employees, parents, students, image, reputation and information.
- The SABJE may be held vicariously liable for information, comments and submissions that are shared or made by employees on social media platforms. As such, the SABJE expects its employees to exercise personal responsibility when they engage in social media.

**Always remember that your relationship with the school is based on trust and confidence. You have a legal duty to act in good faith towards the school – this duty extends to not doing anything on social media that may bring the name of the school into disrepute, and requires you to always act in the best interests of the school.**

The following statements are guiding principles that should apply to all employees when engaging in social media:

- **Communications on social media are no different from offline communications:** Nothing about social media changes your responsibilities and obligations to the school. Your obligations in terms of your contract of employment and other applicable policies apply to your conduct on social media. These policies must be respected and considered in every use of social media.
- **Everything you say and do online reflects on the school** – When engaging on social media, don't forget that you are an ambassador for the SABJE. In the age of the Internet, your content is easily associated with the SABJE. This association is even more likely where you affiliate yourself with the school on your social media profiles – whether by listing us as your employer, associating with your colleagues or making the affiliation apparent from the content you post. So before posting anything on social media, ask yourself whether your content is something that could reflect negatively on the school. If there is



a chance that it will, don't post it. For example, distasteful jokes about rape, AIDS, bomb threats, inappropriate pictures, inappropriate profile pictures, racist comments or the like are not acceptable.

- **Don't disparage the SABJE, its staff or its pupils:** While we acknowledge that you may wish to periodically post content on social media about your job, you may not comment negatively on social media about the school or any of its employees, parents, students, policies, projects, events or activities (whether directly or indirectly).
- **Do not air your grievances online:** You may not use your personal social media platforms to air personal grievances regarding the SABJE, its policies, procedures, staff, pupils or otherwise. The school has well-established internal procedures that are to be followed, and disciplinary action will be taken should these procedures not be followed. An example of an unacceptable post:

*The kids are driving me mad. Get me out of here!*

- **Do not use social media for internal communications:** Employees shall not use social media platforms for internal communications with fellow employees. The only exception to this is the use of Whatsapp Groups approved by the school for such communications.

**Remember that Whatsapp is also a form of social media, so once you are in a group, all content on that group is considered published content. It just takes one screenshot to make the content of a Whatsapp Group public. If you would not put the content you are about to post on Whatsapp on a billboard over the highway, next to a photograph of yourself, your name and the name of the school, you should not post it.**

- **Do not share the SABJE's intellectual property:** When posting any communication on social media platforms, employees should take account of the confidentiality obligations contained in their employment/engagement contracts with the school. These obligations apply on social media too. There is a duty in common law on all employees to maintain these confidences of their employer, and not to disclose any confidential information. Information as to clients, business relationships, financial information, quotes, tenders,



budgets as well as technical know-how and data, systems, student lists, family information and the like are all examples of such confidential information. If there is any doubt, or a member of staff is unsure of what information confidentiality extends to, then the onus is on that staff member to seek guidance on the matter.

- **Do not engage with learners on social media:** SABJE employees shall not engage in communications with learners at King David which in the context of the educator/learner relationship are in any manner inappropriate and shall guard against entering into communications originated by learners addressed to them which are inappropriate in any way. The SABJE places a special emphasis on the prohibition of the exertion of any form of verbal, physical or inappropriate psychological influence or control on students.
- SABJE employees shall take appropriate steps to warn learners who initiate inappropriate communications of any nature (including on social media) that such communication is inappropriate and, if necessary, will follow appropriate disciplinary channels in dealing with inappropriate communications.
- Should an employee become aware of inappropriate communication between any member of staff and a learner, this should instantly be reported to the Head of School/Manager. *(Take note of the Prevention of Sexual Abuse Policy)*
- **Don't speak on the SABJE's behalf:** Do not act as a spokesperson for the SABJE or the King David Schools. If you see a post on social media that requires the school's response, refer it according to the Escalation Procedure detailed below. Do not attempt to respond yourself. An example of an unacceptable response:

*Sorry to hear your child didn't do well in his exams. I work at the school, let me see if I can get feedback for you.*

You may at times private message them so as to assist with their concerns depending on your role in the organisation.

- **Do not violate privacy of employees, parents or students:** We take the privacy of our employees, parents and students very seriously, and you have an obligation not to violate that privacy. Before you post anything on social media, think about whether the content is yours to share. You may not, for instance, post any pictures of employees, parents or students at the school. The school may however post this content on the school Facebook



page or in a school newsletter (see Section 9) unless a family has specifically objected to this.

- **Adhere to the terms and conditions governing the use of social media** on any social media platforms that you use.
- **Respect the law and the rights of others:** Employees, parents and students must always be treated with dignity and respect. Employees must be courteous and helpful, fair and open, and must observe a high standard of ethics when engaging in social media. Furthermore, employees must show respect for all persons and avoid discriminatory behaviour and victimisation of other social media users. Don't be afraid to be yourself on social media, but do so courteously and respectfully and be thoughtful about how others may be affected. In particular, don't post or link to any content that:
  - Is defamatory, racist or insulting – for example, calling someone the k-word, a slut or falsely accusing them of theft;
  - Amounts to hate speech – hate speech is harmful or hateful content that discriminates on the basis of prohibited grounds such as race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation or religion;
  - Is fraudulent or untrue. The SABJE requires utmost standards of honesty and integrity from its employees. This applies to all aspects of the employment relationship, the work the employee undertakes for the SABJE and relationships with all stakeholders and the general public. This standard is non-negotiable;
  - May be used for any unlawful purposes or the furtherance of illegal activities
  - Is harassing or threatening;
  - Is obscene, pornographic, indecent, lewd, suggestive or otherwise objectionable;
  - Is invasive of the privacy of others – before you post anything on social media, think about whether the content is yours to share;
  - Infringes on intellectual property rights – for example, using written content, logos or pictures without permission. You must respect the copyright and intellectual property of material that you may work with. You may not make copies of proprietary material which may belong to the SABJE or others, and you may not make use of such material other than for the purposes intended. Neither may you make use of any pirated or illegal material whilst doing the work for the SABJE, nor load any such material on SABJE's machines,



systems, servers and the like. Equally downloading copyright protected material from the web onto the school's system or servers is not permitted; or

- May be detrimental to the SABJE itself or any educator, learner or parent at King David. You have a duty of good faith to your employer and may not express negative opinions about your employer on social media or compete with your employer. What this means is that whilst you are in employment, you are required to put the interests of the employer before those of yourself. You may not compete with the employer's interests or its business, or act in any way which conflicts with its business. This would include divulging confidential information or directing business to parties other than your employer.

*Even if you did not originate the content, remember that you will be held responsible for material that you retweet, share or like on social media.*

- **You have the right to freedom of expression but that right may not unjustifiably infringe on the rights of others** – for example, someone else's right to a good reputation, dignity or privacy. Before you post something on social media, think about the impact that it could have on your colleagues, the parents, your students, the school and the general public. If in doubt, either give it some time and reconsider it at a later stage, or simply don't post it.
- **Don't disregard the school's values** – Always represent yourself with dignity online, and do not say or do anything contradictory or in conflict with the school's values. This includes commenting in an inflammatory or objectionable way on topics such as politics and religion, posting naked pictures of yourself, using bad language, or doing or saying anything that creates a hostile work environment.
- **Don't misuse the school's identity** – Employees shall not use the school's name or logo in their personal profiles. As such, employees should not include any of the school's brand symbols or logos in their personal postings. Your social media identity, login identity, profile picture, "handle" or username may not use or incorporate the name or logo of the school or any abbreviated or shortened version of the name. You may also not use the school name to endorse or promote any product, opinion, cause or political candidate on social media. You may, however, list the school as your employer on social media profiles. Examples of unacceptable profile names:

X @JohnKingDavid

X Joe Blog's Blog: A King David insider



- **Don't speak negatively about other schools:** The SABJE discourages any abuse of or attacks on other schools on social media.
- **Be transparent:** Avoid using social media anonymously, or using a pseudonym or false screen name. If questioned, be upfront about the fact that you work for the school.
- **Be truthful and avoid misrepresentations:** Do not say anything that is dishonest, inaccurate or misleading. If you have a vested interest in something you are discussing, point it out, and if you make a mistake, be up-front about the error and correct it quickly. In all social media engagements, the school will not condone any manipulation or false representation of any information related to the school that the employee provides to other social media users.
- **As soon as you leave the employ of or end your association with the SABJE, you are required to remove all social media references to the school as your current employer or associate.**
- **Don't forget your day job** – Your online activities should never interfere with your job performance or commitment to the school, your colleagues and your students. As such staff may not be posting on social media during work hours unless it is specifically required from them as a part of their work duties.
- **Avoid social media “disclaimers”** – The school discourages the use of disclaimers such as “I tweet in my personal capacity” or “My views are not those of my employer”. If you do elect to use any of these disclaimers in your social media profiles, do not treat them like a magic wand that will prevent any liability in terms of this Policy.
- **Respect the intellectual property of others:** Employees may be held liable if they post any material belonging to a third party that is of a confidential nature or is subject to copyright.
  - Pictures, words, videos, logos and music are protected in terms of intellectual property law. Just because material is freely available online, it does not mean that you may use it without permission.
  - You should never quote more than short excerpts of someone else's work, and always attribute such work to the original author/source.
  - It is good general practice to link to other's work rather than reproduce it.



- **In the age of the Internet, even what you say and do offline has the potential to negatively impact on the school:** We live in an age in which much of what we do is documented, photographed and filmed. What this means is that behaviour outside of work hours and offsite that is either unlawful or contradictory to the school's values has the potential to land up online, thereby reflecting negatively on the school. For example, if you make a racial slur while out drinking, someone could overhear you or take a picture/video and turn to Twitter with "Just heard some guy call the barman the k-word. He says he works at the SABJE/King David". It doesn't matter that it was outside work hours: there is always a chance that what you do in the real world ends up online. Should this happen, it could not only do serious harm to your personal and professional reputation, but could potentially result in disciplinary consequences.
- Understand that the school retains the right to examine the social media accounts (if accessible) of any individual associated with the Company brand.
- Security Risk: No postings of information or pictures that could compromise school security. (See attached CSO guidelines)
- Ethos: Nothing may be posted on social media that could be construed to be on behalf of the schools on a Shabbat or Jewish festival.

## 7. Escalation Procedure

- Immediately upon becoming aware of a discussion thread, posting, comment, statement or misrepresentation that needs to be brought to the attention of the SABJE (consider the examples laid out in this policy) and/or has the potential to impact on the reputation of an individual or the school as a whole, the Head of School/Manager must be notified. This notification should, where possible, be accompanied by a screenshot of (and link to) the relevant content.
- At no point are you authorised to engage on behalf of the SABJE (whether publicly or privately) with the person or entity responsible for the content.

## 8. Enforcement of this policy

- The terms of this policy shall have the force of a contractual agreement between the SABJE and its employees.



- This policy shall be enforced by those parties chosen by the SABJE to do so.
- If disciplinary proceedings are appropriate, they will be conducted in terms of the disciplinary procedures in force at the SABJE at the time.

## 9. Participating in Social Media on behalf of the school

- Only employees who are authorised by the Head of School/Manager ("**Authorised Employees**") may engage in social media on behalf of the school.
- Only Authorised Employees can use social media platforms to speak on behalf of the school in an official capacity. Unless otherwise authorised by the school to do so, an employee shall not speak on behalf of the school and shall not represent himself/herself as an Authorised Employee.
- Only Authorised Employees may comment on any aspect of the school's business and/or issue in which the school is involved. When making such comment, the employee must identify himself/herself as an employee of the school.
- An Authorised Employee who engages in social media on behalf of the school must ensure that he/she is familiar with the SABJE's views on specific issues and should not express views that are outside those set out by the SABJE.
- If an Authorised Employee is not familiar with, or is unsure of the school's position on any specific issue, he/she should seek clarity from the Head of School/Manager.
- The school may instruct Authorised Employees to avoid certain subjects/topics and has the right to monitor and review comments and submissions made by Authorised Employees. The school shall take appropriate action against any Authorised Employee who makes comments or submissions that are not authorised by the school.
- Authorised Employees must use appropriate formal language in their communication with third parties, including other social media users.
- When using social media platforms on behalf of the school, Authorised Employees shall not:
  - Post any illegal, unethical and/or disrespectful content



- Engage in any online communication or social media activities which could bring the school into disrepute;
  - Disclose personal details of other employees, parents or students;
  - Disclose any confidential information; and
  - Provide any information that is inaccurate and unapproved.
- See Employee Handbook (June 2016) “representations on behalf of the Board” (Page 31).

## 10. Failure to Comply with this Policy

- Failure to comply with this policy may result in disciplinary action being taken against the relevant Employee or Authorised Employee as per the Employee Manual. Employees should note that certain instances of non-compliance with this policy may lead to summary dismissal.

## 11. Related policies, standards, procedures and guidelines

- Acceptable Use Policy
- South African Board of Education Employee Handbook
- Prevention of Sexual Abuse Policy

## 12. Helpful tips and considerations when engaging on social media

The above instructions clarify what you can and cannot say on social media, but we also want to help *you* get the full benefit of social media - so we've compiled this list of guidelines to help you get the best from social media without landing yourself in trouble.

### 1. Think before you post

- The speed of being able to publish your thoughts at the click of a button is both a great feature and a great downfall of social media. But remember that the



Internet never forgets - what you publish will be around for a long time, so you need to reflect on and edit your content carefully. If in doubt over a post, or if something does not feel right:

- let it sit for while and reconsider it at a later time;
  - ask someone's advice; or
  - simply don't post it!
- Take personal responsibility for your actions and words on social media.

## 2. **Be yourself**

- Be interesting and have fun, but stay out of trouble.
- Write about what you know. You may find yourself embarrassed by an expert if you comment on topics that you are not properly informed about.

## 3. **Take the time to do things properly**

- Quality matters. Use spell-checker. If you're not design-orientated, ask someone who is whether your blog looks decent, and take their advice on how to improve it.

## 4. **Protect your privacy**

- Be mindful of posting information that you would not want the public to see.  
**There is no such thing as "privacy" on social media.**
- Be cautious about disclosing personal details about yourself online.
- Change your passwords frequently
- Never click on any links that seem untrustworthy – if a friend sends you something via private message, rather confirm with them that the link is safe.

## 5. **Be upfront and honest**

- Do not say anything that is dishonest, untrue, or misleading. If you have a vested interest in something you are discussing, point it out.



**6. Respect the intellectual property of others**

- Pictures, words, videos, logos and music are protected in terms of intellectual property law. Just because material is freely available online, it does not mean that you may use it without permission.
- You should never quote more than short excerpts of someone else's work, and always attribute such work to the original author/source.
- It is good general practice to link to others' work rather than reproduce it.

**7. Be respectful of others**

- If you speak about others, make sure what you say is factual and that it does not disparage that party.
- Avoid arguments. Don't try to settle scores or provoke others into inflammatory debates.

**8. Be the first to respond to your own mistakes**

- If you make an error, be up front about your mistake and correct it quickly. If you choose to modify an earlier post, make it clear that you have done so.
- If someone accuses you of posting something improper (such as their copyrighted material or a defamatory comment about them), delete the content immediately and apologise. Legal disputes are expensive and it is rarely worth the fight.

**The best advice that we can give is to learn and have fun on social media, but do so responsibly. Ultimately approach social media as you would the "real world": use sound judgement and common sense and act with integrity. Most importantly always remember that you are an ambassador for the SABJE – whether you're on social media or not – and your conduct on and offline has the potential to cause damage to the reputation of not only the SABJE and its other employees, parents and students but perhaps even**