



## St Augustine Primary School

Dear Parents and Caregivers,

With the creation of the Parents and Friends' Facebook page, it is timely as a school community to consider the implications of social media.

The internet, mobile phones and social media provide wonderful opportunities for you to network and socialise online. While these technologies provide positive platforms for sharing ideas, they also have the potential to cause pain and suffering to individuals, groups or even whole communities.

Just as you would discourage your child from behaving inappropriately online, it's important to remember that comments that parents and caregivers post about their school community have a greater impact than expected.

Reputations of teachers, schools, principals and even parents can be permanently damaged and in some cases, serious instances of inappropriate online behaviour are dealt with by police and the court system.

### GENERAL TIPS

Being aware of a few simple strategies can help keep the use of social media positive and constructive:

- Before you post something online, ask yourself if the community or individual really need to know. Is it relevant, positive and helpful?
- Be a good role model. If things get heated online consider logging out and taking a few moments to relax and think. Hasty, emotive responses could inflame situations unnecessarily
- Be aware that online discussions can very quickly be shared with a much wider audience, potentially far larger than intended.
- Parental and community feedback is important for schools. If you have a compliment, complaint or enquiry about an issue at school, the best approach is to speak directly to the school about the matter, rather than discussing it in a public forum such as Facebook
- If you encounter negative or derogatory content online which involves the school, hinders a child's learning and/or affects the school community at large, please contact the school immediately.

### POSSIBLE CIVIL OR CRIMAL RAMIFICATIONS OF ONLINE COMMENTARY

A serious instance of inappropriate online behaviour may constitute a criminal offence and become a police matter. For example, online content may substantiate the offence of 'using a carriage service to menace, harass or cause offence' (Criminal Code Act 1995 (Cth)s.474.17).



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School staff may contact their union or obtain personal legal advice if they feel that online content seriously impacts their reputation. Defamatory online content may give rise to litigation.

Social media, in particular Facebook, is an excellent way to connect our school community and with your help we can ensure that it remains a positive communication tool for all those who choose to use it.

As always, if you have any concerns please contact me directly.

Yours truly  
Jonnine Lamborne  
Principal  
*Reaching for Great Heights*

