Dangers of social media

There are many forms of social media such as Facebook and Twitter that now seem to be a natural part of everyone’s life. These can be used in a positive way and are often a convenient method of staying in contact with friends and family in today’s busy world. Unfortunately, these types of social media can also be used in a very negative and unhelpful way as they provide an avenue where critical remarks can be communicated about the school, members of the school staff, students or parents that can be very damaging and hurtful.

All Saints’ College prides itself on having an ‘Open Door’ policy, that is, parents/guardians and students should always feel welcome to come and discuss any problems or grievances they may have with either the teacher, the Head of Junior School or the Head of College. This is a much better form of communication to use to express grievances than social media. Inappropriate comments have the potential to inflame situations because they are very public. People obviously get upset if critical remarks about them are posted in a public domain without (or even with) their knowledge of it occurring.

A story in the Western Advocate on Tuesday, 4th March 2014, highlighted the serious consequences that can result when someone defames another person on social media. In this situation an ex-student of a school made ungracious and defamatory comments about a teacher and was fined $85,000 in compensatory damages and $20,000 in aggravated damages.


We all need to realise that once something is written it is there for many to see. It can then either be downloaded or printed on paper making the comments permanent and in the public domain forever. We should realise that individuals who have been defamed publicly in one of these forms of social media can make a civil claim for defamation of character through the legal process.

Even though advancements in technology continue to make our ability to communicate quicker and more convenient, we must ensure we adhere to acceptable social conventions and not use social media in a way that could cause harm to others. All Saints’ College encourages parents and guardians to support the school with their stance on this issue and to regularly revisit conversations with their children about how social media should be used in a positive way. Parents of primary school aged children need to be aware of what forms of social media their children are using and the way in which they are using it. Parents also need to be very careful about what they post on their own social media sites in order to ensure people associated with the school are not unfairly represented.

As technology seems to be advancing at an exponential rate, it will not be long until there are even more forms of social media developed for us to use. The important thing is that, as the forms in which we communicate change, we must ensure that we adhere to the same set of principles, values and ethics that we have always expected when conversing with one another.

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