

Schools draw strict social media boundaries

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- Holiday snapshots, party pictures, or any private social media posts by teachers should be hidden from students.
- Parents should avoid posting photos, videos, or comments featuring other students.
- Children should not upload pictures of their school or themselves while in uniform.

Calcutta: Several schools have formulated strict social media policies over the past couple of years and are adhering to them rigorously, authorities said.

Social media has invaded private spaces, and, in most cases, adults are responsible for allowing such intrusion.

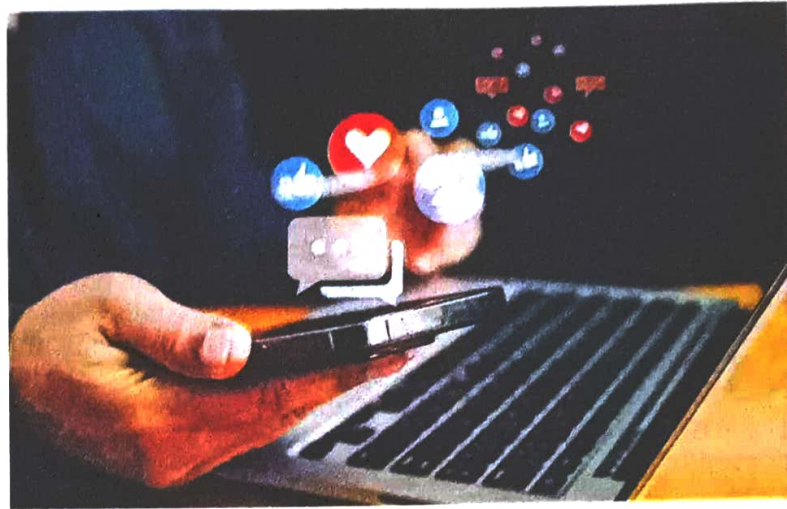
Schools also do not want social media to become a platform for airing grievances against the institution. Consequently, the policies now extend to staff members and parents as well.

The Loreto schools have drafted a policy requesting that parents not click pictures, make reels, or record videos of their child, other students, staff members, or themselves while on campus or outside if the child is in uniform.

The Newtown School has said that no one shall share travel itineraries of school trips or plans on any social networking sites. "No one shall use social media to attack, insult, abuse, or defame students, their family members, the stand, or the school," it says.

The Heritage School requests that teachers refrain from "advertising" their private lives on social media.

"Students can post their pictures in uniform only when they are formal photographs taken during an official school programme," a school official said.



The school has a firewall that prevents anyone, including teachers, from accessing social media while on campus.

Sri Sri Academy allows teachers to post, but only when their pictures are hidden from students and their parents.

"Whenever we put up any picture anywhere, we seek the consent of parents before doing so. If we are taking the consent of parents, we expect the same. Also, we put pictures of our children only on official school pages," said Seema Sapru, principal, The Heritage School.

Schools are also mindful of the fact that no post by a student, teacher or parent should bring down the reputation of the school.

"We are not asking them not to be on social media. But what they post related to the child or school should be aligned with the institution's ethos," said Sunil Agarwal, founder director, The Newtown School.

"This policy sets out the principles that all staff members, students and their parents are expected to follow when accessing or engaging with social media, to promote safe, respectful, and responsible digital behaviour. It reinforces the school's commitment to protecting the emotional well-being,

privacy, and dignity of all its members and safeguarding the school's reputation," The Newtown School's policy posted on their website says.

Grievances against the school should be brought to the institution's notice instead of being aired online, Agarwal said.

"On many occasions, social media is used as leverage against the school," he said.

Violation of the social media policy could also lead to bullying and child protection issues, schools said, adding that the two often overlap.

Pictures of children can reveal unnecessary personal information, potentially putting their safety at risk.

"When children are in school uniform, they become identifiable, and their location, photograph and the name of the school are divulged, which is in contradiction with our child protection policy," said Nandini Bhattacharjee, education director, Loreto South Asia.

Children may be tempted to skip classes to make reels in school or while in uniform, but that can have far graver ramifications, said Gargi Banerjee, principal of Sri Sri Academy.

"Making reels is trending, but we cannot allow that within the premises," Banerjee said.