

Policy Reviewed – March 2026

Date of Next Review– March 2027

1. Introduction

Social media platforms provide valuable opportunities for communication, collaboration, and community engagement. However, misuse of these platforms can lead to reputational harm, cyberbullying, or defamation. This policy outlines the school's stance on defamation, cyber misconduct, and online abuse, ensuring compliance with UAE Federal Laws, KHDA expectations, and school safeguarding guidelines to protect the wellbeing, dignity, and rights of all community members.

2. Purpose of the Policy

The objectives of this policy are to promote ethical and responsible use of social media among students, staff, and parents; protect the school community from defamation, cyberbullying, harassment, or misinformation; ensure compliance with UAE Cybercrime Law No. 34 of 2021, UAE Penal Code No. 31 of 2021, and KHDA safeguarding standards; uphold the school's reputation, confidentiality, and digital integrity; and reinforce that school logos and trademarks cannot be used without prior written consent.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all students, parents, guardians, staff members, and stakeholders affiliated with the school. It covers all forms of digital and social media (WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, etc.) and applies to any online activity that directly or indirectly affects the school community or institutional reputation.

4. Definition of Defamation

Defamation refers to publishing false, misleading, or offensive statements that harm the reputation or dignity of an individual or institution. Examples include circulating false claims or rumors, sharing misleading information, posting degrading remarks, or uploading images/videos without consent.

5. Principles of Responsible Digital Conduct

We uphold the principles of Respect, Responsibility, and Accountability. Users must separate personal opinions from school representation, avoid actions discrediting the school, not present personal opinions as school stances, maintain confidentiality, and never defame any member of the school community.

6. Personal Use of Social Media

Students and parents must not present themselves as official school representatives. Staff should not connect with students/parents through personal accounts; all communication must occur via approved channels (school email, MS Teams). Content featuring school property or individuals requires prior written approval.

7. Use of Official School Social Media

Only approved school platforms may be used for official purposes. All new pages/accounts require corporate communication approval. Student use of social media is permitted only for educational purposes. Digital citizenship lessons will be integrated within the curriculum.

8. Roles and Responsibilities

- Students must use social media responsibly; Users should not engage in activities involving social media which might bring Apple International School into disrepute.
- Staff must maintain professionalism; leadership will monitor and take disciplinary or legal action where needed. Staff should not accept any current student of any age or any ex-student of the school under the age of 18 as a friend, follower, and subscriber or similar on any personal social media account.
- It is recognized that AIS teachers and other members of staff are often connected to AIS parents through personal social media, especially within expatriate communities. These relationships can bring significant personal benefits and enhance the reputation of the company where the content posted by employees is positive. In such interactions, AIS employees must remain mindful.
- Parents must model positive online behavior and guide the children in responsible digital use.

9. Consequences of Violations

Depending on severity: Students may face warnings, counselling, suspension, or expulsion; staff may receive warnings or termination; parents may be restricted or referred to legal authorities. Severe breaches may be reported to UAE Cybercrime Authorities.

10. Preventive & Educational Measures

The school will conduct annual workshops, integrate digital citizenship into wellbeing programs, run awareness campaigns such as 'Think Before You Post,' and provide confidential reporting mechanisms.

11. Monitoring & Compliance

The school reserves the right to monitor internet use without notice. Users should have no expectation of privacy when using school devices or school networks. Unauthorized or defamatory content sharing is prohibited.

12. UAE Legal Framework

Federal Decree–Law No. 34 of 2021 criminalizes defamation, insult, or slander via electronic means and spreading false information. Penalties include fines from AED 250,000 to AED 500,000, imprisonment, and deportation for expatriates.

13. Reporting Procedure

Incidents must be reported immediately to the Principal, Designated Safeguarding Lead, or Counsellor. Reports will be confidential, documented, and investigated. Serious cases will be escalated to legal authorities.

14. Awareness & Training

Students receive training in digital safety; staff complete annual CPD on online professionalism and UAE law; parents are engaged through orientation and wellbeing workshops.

15. Review and Updates

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Leadership and Compliance Division, ensuring alignment with UAE laws and KHDA guidelines. Updates will be shared through staff handbooks, parent circulars, and student orientation.

Additional Clause

Any individual creating or administering unauthorized online groups using the school's name or logo without consent will face disciplinary or legal action under UAE intellectual property laws.

Regards,

Principal

