

St. Mary's School

Internet Safety: Acceptable Use Policy

And Mobile Phone Use

The aim of this Acceptable Use Policy is to ensure that students will benefit from learning opportunities offered by the school's Internet resources in a safe and effective manner.

Our students are aged 4-18 years of age and have Moderate, Severe/Profound General Learning Difficulties or Autism. They do not access the internet independently. However, the school accesses the internet to find resources and software that may be of interest to our pupils.

School's Strategy

The school employs a number of strategies in order to maximise learning opportunities and reduce risks associated with the Internet. These strategies are as follows:

General

- Internet sessions will always be supervised by a teacher / SNA
- Filtering software and/or equivalent systems will be used in order to minimise the risk of exposure to inappropriate material
- Teachers will be provided with training in the area of Internet safety
- Uploading and downloading of non-approved software will not be permitted
- Virus protection software will be used and updated on a regular basis

World Wide Web

- Teachers will not intentionally visit Internet sites that contain obscene, illegal, hateful or otherwise objectionable materials
- Teachers will report accidental accessing of inappropriate materials in accordance with school procedures
- Teachers will use the Internet for educational purposes only

Inappropriate Activities

Users including staff members shall not visit Internet sites, make, post, download, upload, data transfer, communicate or pass on, material, remarks, proposals or comments that contain or relate to:

- child sexual abuse images,
- promotion or conduct of illegal acts, eg under the child protection,
- obscenity,
- Songs/videos with inappropriate language or inappropriate content
- computer misuse and fraud legislation,
- racist material,
- pornography,
- promotion of any kind of discrimination,
- promotion of racial or religious hatred,
- threatening behaviour, including promotion of physical violence or mental harm,

- any other information which may be offensive to colleagues or breaches the integrity of the ethos of the school or brings the school into disrepute
- Using school systems to run a private business
- Use systems, applications, websites or other mechanisms that bypass the filtering or other safeguards employed by NCTE or the school
- Uploading, downloading or transmitting commercial software or any copyrighted materials belonging to third parties, without the necessary licensing permissions
- Revealing or publicising confidential or proprietary information (eg financial / personal information, databases, computer / network access codes and passwords)
- Creating or propagating computer viruses or other harmful files
- Carrying out sustained or instantaneous high volume network traffic (downloading / uploading files) that causes network congestion and hinders others in their use of the internet
- On-line gaming
- On-line gambling
- On-line shopping / commerce
- File sharing
- Use of social networking sites
- Personal email accounts during school hours unless with permission from Principal/Teacher.

The school uses the Filtering Service from NCTE. Ours is set to not allow Facebook. This will be reviewed annually.

School Website

The school website is hosted through Scoilnet.ie. It is currently maintained and updated by the Principal in accordance with clear policies and approval processes regarding the content that can be loaded to the school's website. Parents have to have signed a Permission Slip that allows the use of photographs of their child on the school website, Facebook page, newspapers and promotional material from the school.

- The website will be regularly checked to ensure that there is no content that compromises the safety of students or staff.
- The school will endeavour to use digital photographs, audio or video clips focusing on group activities. Content focusing on individual students will only be published on the school website with parental permission
- Personal student information including home address and contact details will be omitted from school web pages
- The school website will avoid publishing the first name and last name of individuals in a photograph
- The school will ensure that the image files are appropriately named and will not use students' names in image file names or ALT tags if published on the web .

Legislation

The school will provide information on the following legislation relating to use of the Internet which teachers, and parents should familiarise themselves with:

- Data Protection (Amendment) Act 2003
- GDPR May 2017
- Child Trafficking and Pornography Act 1998

- Interception Act 1993
- Video Recordings Act 1989
- The Data Protection Act 1988

Support Structures

The school will inform parents of key support structures and organisations that deal with illegal material or harmful use of the Internet.

Mobile Phone Use

Staff and pupils are not permitted to use their mobile phone during class times. At this time, no pupils have phones in school. If the phone is kept in class it must be switched off or on silent. Staff may use their phones during breaks. For emergency contact the school mobile number may be given. If staff are out with a pupil on their own, they may use their phone as a point of contact with the school in an emergency situation. Any photos taken on personal phones of the pupils or activities within the school must only be used for school purposes and then deleted. If any school content is found uploaded onto any personal social media without permission of the school Principal, it will be referred to for disciplinary action.

Sanctions

Misuse of the Internet and phones by a member of staff may result in disciplinary action, including written warnings and, in extreme cases, suspension or dismissal. The school also reserves the right to report any illegal activities to the appropriate authorities.

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 3rd October 2016

It will be reviewed annually.

Staff will read and sign the current policy and this will be kept on file. Policy will be available on school website.

Reviewed and updated 11/2/2019