

Internet Acceptable Use Policy

Introduction

The aim of this Internet Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) is to ensure that pupils benefit from the learning opportunities offered by the school's internet resources in a safe and effective manner. It highlights the need to educate staff and pupils about the benefits and risks of using digital technologies and the internet. The policy also provides safeguards and awareness for users to equip themselves with the skills they need to become responsible users of digital technologies and the internet. The school's Acceptable Use Policy will operate in conjunction with other policies including the Code of Behaviour, Anti-Bullying Policy and Child Safeguarding Statement.

Scope of the Policy

This policy encompasses the use of digital technologies and the internet. It applies to all members of the school community (including staff, pupils, volunteers, parents / guardians, visitors) who have access to and use of the school network and of school devices, both in and out of school. It is also relevant to incidents of cyber-bullying and other internet safety incidents, which may take place out of school, but are linked to the school. The school will deal with such incidents in accordance with this policy and associated Behaviour, Anti-Bullying and Child Safeguarding Policies.

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:

1. **Awareness** – ensuring staff, pupils and parents / guardians are aware of the risks
2. **Education** – providing staff, pupils and parents / guardians with the knowledge they need to protect themselves and others
3. **Technology** – providing safe, secure and filtered internet access
4. **Access** - access to the internet and devices is not permitted unless the appropriate Pupil / Staff Acceptable Use Agreement has been signed

Internet Safety Education & Awareness – Pupils

Internet Safety education and awareness will be provided in the following ways:

- Through Online Safety Workshops provided by Barnardos
- As part of our implementation of the SPHE curriculum – this will cover the use of digital technologies and the internet both in school and outside school
- Key internet safety messages will be reinforced as part of assembly
- Pupils will be taught to evaluate the materials / content they access online
- Pupils will be helped to understand the need to adopt safe and responsible use of devices with internet access both in school and outside school
- Pupils will be taught to acknowledge the source of information used and to respect copyright when using material accessed on the internet
- Staff will act as good role models in their use of digital technologies and the internet

Education & Training – Staff

It is essential that all staff receive training and understand their responsibilities, as outlined in this policy. Training will be offered as follows:

- Training to ensure the full understanding of the Internet Acceptable Use Policy which will be made available to all staff
- All new staff will receive training as part of their induction programme, ensuring that they fully understand the Internet Acceptable Use Policy
- The ICT Coordinator will provide advice, guidance and training to individuals as required

Managing Access

A separate Acceptable Use Agreement is provided for staff and pupils

- All users must agree to and sign the appropriate Acceptable Use Agreement before they can use the school's digital technologies and network

General Procedures

- Pupils and teachers will be provided with training in the area of Internet safety.
- Parents must have signed the appropriate permission forms at enrolment before a pupil is allowed internet access or their photograph or work is published on the school website.
- Internet sessions for pupils will always be supervised by a teacher / adult.
- Filtering software and/or equivalent systems will be used in order to minimise the risk of exposure to inappropriate material.
- The school will regularly monitor pupils' Internet usage.
- Uploading and downloading of non-approved software will not be permitted.
- Virus protection software will be used and updated on a regular basis.
- The use of personal memory sticks, CD-ROMs, or other digital storage media in school by pupils requires a teacher's permission.
- Staff and pupils will treat others with respect at all times and will not undertake any actions that may bring the school into disrepute.

Internet

- Pupils will not intentionally visit Internet sites that contain obscene, illegal, hateful or otherwise objectionable materials.
- Pupils will report accidental accessing of inappropriate materials to their teacher.
- Pupils will use the Internet for educational purposes only.
- Pupils will never disclose or publicise personal information.
- Downloading materials or images not relevant to schoolwork, is in breach of the school's acceptable use policy.
- Pupils will be aware that any usage, including distributing or receiving information, school-related or personal, may be monitored for unusual activity, security and/or network management reasons.
- Pupils will not use the internet unsupervised and without permission.

Email

Pupils may use email to contact other schools or as part of school projects and activities.

- Pupils will use approved class email accounts under supervision by or permission from a teacher.
- Pupils will not send or receive any material that is illegal, obscene, defamatory or that is intended to annoy or intimidate another person.
- Pupils will not reveal their own or other people's personal details, such as addresses or telephone numbers or pictures.
- Pupils will never arrange a face-to-face meeting with someone they only know through emails or the internet.
- Pupils will note that sending and receiving email attachments is subject to permission from their teacher.

Internet Messaging or Chat

- Pupils will only have access to electronic messaging that has been approved by the school and it will only be used for educational purposes. Where used it will always be supervised by a teacher.

School Website

- Pupils will be given the opportunity to publish projects, artwork or school work on the World Wide Web in accordance with clear policies and approval processes regarding the content that can be loaded to the school's website
- Parents must have signed the appropriate permission forms at enrolment before a pupil's photograph or work is published on the website.
- The website will be regularly checked to ensure that there is no content that compromises the safety of pupils or staff.
- The publication of pupil work will be co-ordinated by a teacher.
- Pupils' work will appear in an educational context on Web pages with a copyright notice prohibiting the copying of such work without express written permission.
- The school will endeavour to use digital photographs, audio or video clips focusing on group activities. Content focusing on individual students will not be published on the school website.
- Personal pupil information including **home address, contact details and personal student information** will be omitted from school web pages.
- **Individual photographs will not be published on the school website.**
- The school website will avoid publishing the full name of individuals in a photograph.
- The school will ensure that the image files are appropriately named.
- Pupils will continue to own the copyright on any work published.

Mobile Phones and other Personal Devices

Mobile phones and other personal devices today have increasing capabilities to:

- Send and receive video files and images
- Access the full internet
- Send multimedia messages
- Send SMS (text messages)

Pupils' use of their own technology in school, such as leaving a mobile phone turned on or using it during school time, sending nuisance text messages, or the unauthorized taking of images with a mobile phone camera, still or moving, or use of phone or other personal device for Internet access, is in direct breach of the school's Acceptable Use Policy. **Personal electronic equipment (including mobile phones) is only allowed in school when permission has been given by the principal. If mobile phones are being used on the school property without permission, the phone will be taken from the pupil and parents will be contacted.**

Social Networking

Access to Social Networking sites is blocked in the school.

Managing Emerging Technologies

Emerging technologies will be examined for educational benefit and a risk assessment will be carried out before use in school is allowed.

Bullying (Cyber-bullying)

St. Thomas' Senior National School takes all forms of bullying including cyber bullying very seriously. Cyber bullying is defined as the persistent targeting of an individual or group of individuals by others through the use of ICT – this includes:

- the use of Social Networking Sites to target children;
- the use of Instant Messaging to target children;
- the use of mobile phones to send abusive or threatening messages;
- the use of the Internet to post defamatory comments;

This list is not exhaustive and any behaviour deemed to be cyber bullying will be dealt with in accordance with the school's Anti-Bullying Policy.

One incident of cyber-bullying does constitute bullying and will be dealt with in accordance with the school's Behaviour Policy.

Incidents of cyber-bullying or other e-safety incidents covered by this policy, which may take place out of school, but are linked to the school, will also be dealt with in accordance with the school's Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policies.

Assessing Risks

The school will take all reasonable precautions to ensure that users access only appropriate material. However, due to the international scale and linked nature of Internet content, it is not possible to guarantee that unsuitable material will never appear on a school computer.

The school will monitor ICT provision to establish if the Acceptable Use / E-Safety Policy is adequate and that its implementation is effective.

Support Structures

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

The school will seek to provide information and awareness to parents and guardians through:

- Newsletters, school website and social media
- Parents meetings, online safety courses

Handling Complaints

- Complaints of Internet misuse will be dealt with by a senior member of staff.
- Any complaint about staff misuse must be referred to the principal.
- Complaints of a child protection nature must be dealt with in accordance with school child protection procedures.

Sanctions

Misuse of the Internet may result in disciplinary action, including written warnings, withdrawal of access privileges and, in extreme cases, suspension or expulsion. The school also reserves the right to report any illegal activities to the appropriate authorities. **Any sanctions imposed will be in line with our Code of Behaviour.**

Legislation

Teachers, pupils and parents should be aware of the following legislation relating to use of the Internet:

- Data Protection (Amendment) Act 2003
- Child Trafficking and Pornography Act 1998
- Interception Act 1993
- Video Recordings Act 1989
- The Data Protection Act 1988

The aim of this Acceptable Use Policy is to ensure that pupils will benefit from learning opportunities offered by the school's Internet resources in a safe and effective manner. Internet use and access is considered a school resource and privilege. Therefore, if the school's AUP is not adhered to this privilege will be withdrawn and appropriate sanctions – as outlined in the AUP – will be imposed.

It is envisaged that school and parent representatives will revise the AUP annually. Before signing, the AUP should be read carefully to ensure that the conditions of use are accepted and understood.

This version of the AUP was revised in 2024-25 by the Digital Learning Team.

Pupils' Acceptable Use Agreement for ICT

- I will only use the school's ICT equipment (laptops, PCs, chromebooks, tablets, Nintendo DSs, digital cameras, virtual reality headsets, etc.) for school purposes.
- I will ask permission before using the school's ICT equipment and the Internet.
- I will make sure that I am responsible when using the school's ICT equipment and the Internet.
- I will not intentionally damage or vandalise the school's ICT equipment.
- I will only use websites, software and applications that my teacher has allowed.
- I will tell a staff member if I see anything I'm uncomfortable with.
- I will immediately close any webpage I'm not sure about.
- I will only open, edit and delete my own files.
- I will not bring any personal electronic equipment to school without approval from the Principal.
- I will not download or install any software or applications on the school's ICT equipment.
- I will not try to access any inappropriate material on the Internet.
- I will not create any inappropriate or offensive material when using the school's ICT equipment.
- I will not download any images or files without the approval of an adult.
- I will not use any of the school's ICT equipment during wet break or wet lunch.

I have read, understood and accept the "*Pupils' Acceptable Use Agreement for ICT*"

Name (PRINT):

Signed: **Date:**

Staff Acceptable Use Agreement for ICT

The school tries to ensure that staff and pupils have access to ICT equipment and the Internet for their work and to enhance learning opportunities for students. This policy is intended to ensure that staff will be responsible users while using the school's ICT equipment and the Internet for educational purposes.

- I understand that the school's ICT equipment is for professional use only and should not be used for personal use.
- I understand that this Acceptable Use Policy applies to the use of the school's ICT equipment both in school and outside of school and also to the use of personal equipment in school.
- I understand that my use of school ICT systems, internet and email may be monitored and recorded to ensure policy compliance.
- I will respect system security and I will not disclose any password or security information to anyone.
- All software or hardware used or installed by me will be in accordance with school practice as outlined by the Principal / ICT Co-ordinator.
- I will not try to upload, download or access any materials which are illegal or inappropriate or may cause harm or distress to others.
- I will not try to use any programmes or software that might allow me to bypass the school filtering security systems.
- I will ensure that personal data is stored securely and is used appropriately, whether in school, taken off the school premises or accessed remotely.
- I will respect copyright and intellectual property rights.
- I will report any incidents of concern regarding children's safety to the Designated Liaison Person.
- I will ensure that any electronic communications with pupils including email, are professional and that messages cannot be misunderstood or misinterpreted.
- I will promote e-safety with students in my care and will help them to develop a responsible attitude to system use, communications and publishing.
- I will maintain a professional approach in all ICT activities.
- **Teachers can use mobile phones for the purpose of capturing and showcasing teaching and learning. Photos / videos will then be deleted from their device after 24 hours.**
- When downloading software, I will try to ensure that no other third party software, malware or adware is downloaded with it.
- Internet usage must be of an appropriate nature to minimise pupils' exposure to inappropriate material.
- I will not use the internet for personal use during class times.

The school may exercise its right to monitor the use of the school's information systems and Internet access, to intercept e-mail and to delete inappropriate materials where it believes unauthorised use of the school's information system may be taking place, or the system may be being used for criminal purposes or for storing unauthorised or unlawful text, imagery or sound.

I have read, understood and accept the “*Staff Acceptable Use Agreement for ICT*”

Name (PRINT):

Signed: **Date:**