



# Internet Acceptable Use Policy

## St. Mary's N.S.

*Updated June 2023*

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# 1. General Approach

- 1.1 The aim of this Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) is to ensure that pupils will benefit from learning opportunities offered by the school's digital resources in a safe and effective manner. The responsible use of internet and digital technologies, both online and offline, is considered an integral part of teaching and learning. Therefore, if the school AUP is not adhered to, agreed sanctions will be imposed.
- 1.2 Before signing, the AUP should be read carefully to ensure that the conditions of use are accepted and understood.
- 1.3 When using the internet pupils, parents and staff are expected:
  - a) To always treat others with respect.
  - b) Not to undertake any actions that may bring the school into disrepute.
  - c) Respect the right to privacy of all other members of the school community.
  - d) Respect copyright and acknowledge creators when using online content and resources.
- 1.4 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:
  - a) Filtering software is used in order to minimise the risk of exposure to inappropriate material.
  - b) Uploading and downloading of non-approved software is not permitted.
  - c) The use of personal external digital storage media in school requires school permission.
  - d) Virus protection software will be used and updated on a regular basis.
  - e) Insofar as possible, internet use within school will always be supervised by a teacher or a member of staff.
- 1.5 This Acceptable Use Policy applies to pupils who have access to and are users of the internet in St. Mary's National School. It also applies to members of staff, volunteers, parents, carers, and others who access the internet in St. Mary's National School.
- 1.6 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.

- 1.7 St. Mary's National School will deal with online incidents that take place outside the school that impact on the wellbeing of pupils or staff under this policy and associated codes of behaviour and anti-bullying policies. In such cases St. Mary's National School will, where known, inform parents/carers of incidents of inappropriate online behaviour that take place out of school and impose the appropriate sanctions.
- 1.8 St. Mary's National School implements the following strategies on promoting safer use of the internet:
  - a) Pupils will be provided with education in the area of internet safety as part of our implementation of the SPHE and other curriculum areas.
  - b) Teachers will be provided with continuing professional development opportunities in the area of internet safety.
  - c) St. Mary's National School participates in Safer Internet Day activities to promote safer more effective use of the internet.
- 1.9 This policy and its implementation will be reviewed annually by the following stakeholders: Board of Management, Parents' Association, teaching staff, and support staff. The school will monitor the impact of the policy using:
  - a) Logs of reported incidents
  - b) Surveys and/or questionnaires of pupils, parents, and teaching staff.
- 1.10 Should serious online safety incidents take place, the Designated Liaison Person (DLP), Anne Purcell, or the Deputy Designated Liaison Person (DDL), Marita Keenan, and parents/guardians of the pupil(s) involved should be informed.
- 1.11 The implementation of this Acceptable Use policy will be monitored by the school's staff.

## **2. Content Filtering**

- 2.1 St. Mary's National School has chosen to implement Level Four on content filtering on the Schools Broadband Network. This level allows access to millions of websites including games and YouTube, but blocks access to websites belonging to the personal websites category and websites such as Facebook and Instagram belonging to the Social Networking category.
- 2.2 Pupils taking steps to bypass the content filter by using proxy sites or other means may be subject to disciplinary action, including written warnings, withdrawal of access privileges and, in extreme cases, suspension.

## **3. Internet Use**

- a) Pupils will not intentionally visit internet sites that contain obscene, illegal, hateful or otherwise objectionable materials.
- b) Pupils will be encouraged to report accidental accessing of inappropriate materials in accordance with school procedures.
- c) Pupils will report accidental accessing of inappropriate materials in school but outside the classroom to their class teacher.
- d) Pupils will not copy information into assignments and fail to acknowledge the source (plagiarism and copyright infringement).
- e) Pupils and staff 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.
- f) Pupils will use the Internet for educational purposes only.
- g) Pupils will not engage in online activities such as uploading or downloading large files that result in heavy network traffic which impairs the service for other internet users.
- h) All users will not download or view any material that is illegal, obscene, hateful, defamatory or that is intended to annoy or intimidate another person.
- i) Downloading by pupils of materials or images not relevant to their studies is in direct breach of the school's Acceptable Use policy.
- j) Pupils will never disclose or publicise personal information or passwords.
- k) Pupils will be aware that any usage of the internet and school's digital platform, including distributing or receiving information, school-related or personal, will be monitored.
- l) Use of file sharing and torrent sites is not allowed.

## **4. Use of Artificial Intelligence / GPT tools**

- a) Submitting work generated by Artificial Intelligence (AI) or Generative Pre-Trained Transformer (GPT) tools as original work is considered a violation of academic integrity and is not permitted in St. Mary's N.S.
- b) With express permission from school staff, pupils may on occasion be permitted to use AI/GPT tools for research, experimentation, or educational purposes. However, pupils must clearly distinguish between their own work and any work generated by the tool.
- c) Any use of AI/GPT tools must be acknowledged in the work and cited appropriately.
- d) The use of AI/GPT tools is not a substitute for critical thinking, analysis, and originality, which are expected in all academic work.

## **5. Email and Messaging**

5.1 Downloading by pupils of materials or images not relevant to their studies is not allowed. The use of personal email accounts is allowed at certain times in St. Mary's National School.

- a) Pupils will use approved school email accounts.
- b) Pupils should not under any circumstances share their email account login details with other pupils.
- c) Pupils should not use school email accounts to register for online services such as social networking services, apps, and games.
- d) Pupils will use approved class email accounts under supervision by, or with permission from a teacher.
- e) Pupils should be aware that school email communications may be monitored.
- f) Pupils will not send any material that is illegal, obscene, hateful, defamatory or that is intended to annoy or intimidate another person.
- g) Pupils should immediately report the receipt of any communication that makes them feel uncomfortable, is offensive, discriminatory, threatening or bullying in nature and must not respond to any such communication.
- h) Pupils should avoid opening emails that appear suspicious. If in doubt, pupils should ask their teacher before opening emails from unknown senders.
- i) Pupils will not reveal their own or other people's personal details, such as addresses or telephone numbers or pictures.

- j) Pupils will never arrange a face-to-face meeting with someone they only know through emails or the internet.
- k) Pupils will note that sending and receiving email attachments is subject to permission from their teacher.
- l) Pupils will not forward email messages or screenshots of emails or reply without the permission of the originator.
- m) Pupils must only use their school email for school related activities and for registering for school-based activities only. The use of personal email addresses is not allowed for school-based work except in circumstances when permitted and monitored by the class teacher.
- n) All emails and opinions expressed in email are the responsibility of the author and do not reflect the opinion of the school.

## **6. Social Media and messaging services for staff and pupils**

- 6.1 The internet provides a range of social media tools that allow us to interact and keep in touch. While recognising the benefits of these media for new opportunities for communication, this policy sets out the principles that members of our school community are expected to follow when using social media.
- 6.2 The principles set out in this policy are designed to help ensure that social media is used responsibly so that the confidentiality of pupils and other staff and the reputation of the school is protected.
- 6.3 This policy applies to personal websites such as social networking sites (for example Instagram and TikTok), blogs, microblogs such as Twitter, chatrooms, forums, podcasts, open access online encyclopedias such as Wikipedia, social bookmarking sites such as del.icio.us and content sharing sites such as Flickr and YouTube. The internet is a fast-moving technology, and it is impossible to cover all circumstances or emerging media.
- 6.4 The following statements apply to the use of messaging, blogging and video streaming services in St. Mary's National School:
  - a) Use of instant messaging services and apps including Snapchat, WhatsApp, Viber, etc. is not allowed on school devices in St. Mary's N.S.
  - b) Use of video streaming sites such as YouTube and Vimeo etc. is allowed, with permission from teaching staff.
  - c) No member of the school community should use social media, messaging services and the internet in any way to harass, impersonate, insult, abuse or defame others.

- d) Staff and pupils must not discuss personal information about pupils, staff and other members of the St. Mary's National School community on social media.
- e) Staff and pupils must not use school email addresses for setting up personal social media accounts or to communicate through such media.
- f) Staff and pupils must not engage in activities involving social media which might bring St. Mary's National School into disrepute.
- g) Staff and pupils must not represent their personal views as those of bring St. Mary's National School on any social medium.
- h) Pupils will be provided with guidance on etiquette regarding social media.
- i) Teachers can read further information about the use of Social Media and Electronic Communication here: <https://www.teachingcouncil.ie/en/news-events/latest-news/2021/guidance-for-registered-teachers-about-the-use-of-social-media-and-electronic-communication.html>

## **7. Personal Devices**

7.1 The following statements apply to, (but are not limited to) the use of devices such as mobile phones, tablets, gaming devices, smartwatches, etc. in St. Mary's National School.

- a) Pupils are not permitted to use personal devices in school, unless they have the permission of the teacher. Should this be the case, pupils using their own devices in school should follow the rules set out in this agreement, in the same way as if they were using school equipment.
- b) Any personal device brought onto the school grounds are brought in at the pupil's own risk and the school accepts no responsibility for damage, loss or theft.
- c) Pupils using personal devices for any purpose (such as taking pictures/videos, communicating, accessing the internet etc.) in school without permission are in direct breach of the school's Acceptable Use Policy.
- d) Pupils may not use personal devices with cameras to photograph individuals in the school, school grounds or outside of the school on sporting events and school organised outings/tours, unless they are granted permission to do so by a member of the school staff.
- e) School staff may confiscate a phone or device if they believe it is being used in a way that contravenes this policy, the school's Code of Behaviour or Anti-Bullying policies. The phone or device may be searched by the principal with the consent of the pupil or parent/guardian.

## **8. Digital Learning Platforms (including video conferencing)**

- a) St. Mary's National School's digital learning platform is managed by the school. This platform should enable two-way communication.
- b) Only school devices should be used by pupils for the purposes of capturing and storing media. Staff may use personal devices for the purpose of capturing media but must transfer the data to a school device/platform for the purpose of storage. All media should be deleted from personal devices following this transfer.
- c) All school-related media and data should be stored in accordance with GDPR guidelines.
- d) The use of digital platforms should be used in line with considerations set out in the GDPR guidelines.
- e) Each user of the platform will be provided with their own unique login credentials.
- f) Passwords for digital platforms and accounts should not be shared.
- g) Remote Learning Policy: Should the school ever need to teach via remote learning, the school's Remote Learning Policy will be observed.

## **9. Images and Video**

- a) Care should be taken when taking photographic or video images that pupils are appropriately dressed and are not participating in activities that might bring the individuals or the school into disrepute.
- b) Pupils must not take, use, share, publish or distribute images of others without their permission.
- c) Taking photos or videos on school grounds or when participating in school activities is only allowed with express permission from staff.
- d) Written permission from parents or carers will be obtained before photographs of pupils are published on the school website.
- e) Pupils must not share images, videos or other content online with the intention to harm another member of the school community, regardless of whether this happens in school or outside.
- f) Sharing explicit images and in particular explicit images of pupils and/or minors is an unacceptable and absolutely prohibited behaviour, with serious consequences and sanctions for those involved.

## **10. Inappropriate Activities**

10.1 St. Mary's NS defines 'inappropriate activities' online as:

- a) Promotion or conduct of illegal acts, e.g. under the child protection, obscenity, computer misuse and fraud legislation
- b) Racist material
- c) Pornography
- d) Promotion of any kind of discrimination
- e) Harmful content or threatening behaviour, including promotion of physical violence or mental harm.
- f) 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.
- g) Using school systems to run a private business.
- h) Use systems, applications, websites, or other mechanisms that bypass the filtering or other safeguards employed by the school.
- i) Uploading, downloading, or transmitting commercial software or any copyrighted materials belonging to third parties, without the necessary licensing permissions.
- j) Revealing or publicising confidential or proprietary information (e.g. financial / personal information, databases, computer / network access codes and passwords)
- k) Creating or propagating computer viruses or other harmful files.
- l) 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.
- m) Online gambling
- n) Child sexual abuse material

## **11. School Websites**

- a) Pupils will be given the opportunity to publish projects, artwork, or schoolwork on the internet in accordance with clear policies and approval processes regarding the content that can be loaded to the school's website.
- b) The publication of pupil work will be coordinated by a teacher.
- c) Personal pupil information, including home address and contact details, will not be published on St. Mary's National School web pages.
- d) St. Mary's National School will avoid publishing both the first name and last name of pupils in video or photograph captions published online.
- e) The school will ensure that the image files are appropriately named and will not use pupils' names in image file names or ALT tags if published online.

## **12. Cyberbullying**

- 12.1 This type of bullying is increasingly common and is continuously evolving. Cyberbullying is bullying carried out through the use of information and communication technologies such as text, social media, e-mail, messaging, apps, gaming sites, chatrooms, and other online technologies. Being the target of inappropriate or hurtful messages is the most common form of online bullying. As cyberbullying uses technology to perpetrate bullying behaviour and does not require face to face contact, cyber-bullying can occur at any time (day or night). Many forms of bullying can be facilitated through cyber-bullying. For example, a target may be sent homophobic text messages or pictures may be posted with negative comments about a person's sexuality, appearance etc.
- 12.2 Access to technology means that cyberbullying can happen around the clock and the pupil's home may not even be a safe haven from such bullying. Pupils are increasingly communicating in ways that are often unknown to adults and free from supervision. The nature of these technologies means digital content can be shared and seen by a very wide audience almost instantly and is almost impossible to delete permanently. While cyberbullying often takes place at home and at night, the impact can also be felt in school.
- 12.3 In accordance with the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Schools, St. Mary's National School considers that a once-off offensive or hurtful public message, image or statement on a social network site or other public forum where that message, image or statement can be viewed and/or repeated by other people will be regarded as bullying behaviour.

- 12.4 When using the internet pupils, parents and staff are expected to treat others with respect at all times. Engaging in online activities with the intention to harm, harass, or embarrass another pupil or member of staff, or being reckless as to whether same is caused, is an unacceptable and absolutely prohibited behaviour, with serious consequences and sanctions for those involved.
- 12.5 Measures are taken by St. Mary's National School to ensure that staff and pupils are aware that bullying is defined as unwanted negative behaviour, verbal, psychological or physical, conducted by an individual or group against another person (or persons) and which is repeated over time. This definition includes cyberbullying, even when it happens outside the school, or at night. In addition, the Department of Education Anti-Bullying Procedures 2013 states that cyberbullying occurs as a “once-off offensive or hurtful public message, image or statement on a social network site or another public forum where that message, image or statement can be viewed and/or repeated by other people will be regarded as bullying behaviour.”
- 12.6 The prevention of cyberbullying is an integral part of the Anti-Bullying policy of our school.

### **13. Legislation**

- 13.1 Teachers, pupils and parents should familiarise themselves with the following legislation relating to use of the Internet:
- a) Data Protection Acts 1988 to 2018 and General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)
  - b) Copyright and Related Rights Act 2000
  - c) Child Trafficking and Pornography Act 1998 and Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017
  - d) Children First Act 2015
  - e) Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2020 (Coco’s Law)
  - f) Criminal Damage Act 1991

### **14. Support Structures**

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

## 15. Sanctions

15.1 Misuse of the Internet and digital technologies should be referred to in the school's Code of Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policy and related sanctions regarding misuse as appropriate should be outlined therein. The school also reserves the right to report any illegal activities to the appropriate authorities, including An Garda Síochana.

### Ratification

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 27<sup>th</sup> June 2023.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Chairperson Board of Management

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Principal, Secretary Board of Management