



# INTERNET USAGE POLICY

## Rationale

The Internet is a powerful educational resource that can significantly enhance teaching and learning, when used appropriately. The Board of Management of St. Mary's Secondary School, Baldoye is committed to providing access to Internet facilities in the school, for precisely that purpose. However, there are many potential dangers associated with the use of the Internet and it is the responsibility of the Board of Management to protect all users of the school's Internet facilities, in particular students of St. Mary's, from these dangers. It is also the responsibility of the Board of Management to comply with Irish Legislation in this area. This policy governing access to and use of the Internet in St. Mary's outlines practice and procedure and is also intended to provide maximum protection for users from potential dangers associated with the use of the Internet.

## Policy on internet use

This policy aims to ensure that students and teachers will benefit from the learning opportunities offered to them by the school's internet resources in a safe and effective manner. The policy applies to all students and to all employed by the school. It is understood, that should parents have any concerns in relation to this policy, these concerns should be notified to the school authorities.

The policy is informed by the legislation relating to internet usage. It is underpinned by the School Code of Behaviour which describes sanctions in relation to unacceptable behaviour.

The school reserves the right to apply its anti-bullying policy in respect of bullying that occurs at a location, activity, function or program that is not school related if in the opinion of the principal and/or Board of Management the alleged bullying has created a hostile environment at school for the victim, has infringed on the rights of the victim of the school and/or has materially or substantially disrupted the education process or the orderly operation of the school.

## Legal Framework

The policy takes cognisance of the following legislation which is relevant to internet safety:

- The Child Trafficking and Pornography Act, 1998.
- This Act legislates against anyone who knowingly produces, publishes, prints, distributes, exports, imports, shows possesses or sells child pornography.
- The Interception of Postal Packets and Telecommunications Messages Regulation Act, 1993.
- This act states that telecommunication messages can be intercepted for the purpose of investigation serious offences.
- The Video Recording Act 1989.
- This Act prohibits the distribution of videos which contain obscene or indecent material which may lead to the depravation or corruption of the viewer
- The Data Protection Act, 1988, 2003

## ACCEPTABLE INTERNET USE POLICY

- Students can only use the internet when supervised by a teacher or in the case of senior students, under the direction of a teacher.
- Filtering software will be used to minimise the risk of exposure to inappropriate material.
- Uploading and downloading of non approved software will not be permitted.
- Students must sign the Electronic Equipment and Mobile Phone Policy in the student journal, which must be countersigned by parent/guardian, to indicate that they are prepared to abide by the school's policy on use of the phone and also undertake the schools acceptable use policy below.
- The use of personal USB memory keys, CDs, DVDs in school requires the permission of a teacher.
- When using the internet, no student will undertake any actions that might be likely to bring the school into disrepute.

## World Wide Web

- The school uses a web filtering system which will filter out inappropriate content, where possible.
- Students will not visit Internet Sites which contain content that is illegal, obscene, hateful or objectionable.
- Students will use the Internet for educational purposes only.
- Students must never disclose or publicise personal information.
- Students are not permitted to access personal Email or Webmail accounts.

- Text messaging through mobile phone companies via the Internet is forbidden.
- Online shopping is prohibited.
- Access to instant messaging services is not permitted.
- Uploading and downloading of non approved software will not be permitted.
- Students are advised that usage of the World Wide Web may be monitored for unusual activity, security and or network management reasons.
- The school reserves the right to read all memory devices and disks to ensure that they are virus free.

## Email

- Students will use approved class email accounts under supervision by or permission from a teacher.
- Students will not transmit any material or content that is illegal, obscene, defamatory.
- Students will not transmit any material that is intended to annoy, intimidate or upset another person.
- Students will not reveal either their own personal details or the personal details of anyone else: including address, telephone numbers, photographs.
- The sending of e mail attachments can only be done with the permission of the teacher.
- No student will ever arrange a face to face meeting with someone they only know through e mails or the internet.
- Chat Rooms/ Social Network sites. Students will only have access to chat rooms, social networking sites, discussion forums or other electronic communication forums that have been approved by the school.
- Use of chat rooms and discussion forums must be for educational purposes only.
- Students must use usernames when using chat rooms/ discussion forums so that their identity will be protected.
- Students will not transmit any material that is intended to annoy, intimidate or upset another person.

## School Website

The school website is designed to promote the school within the wider community. It will also allow parents, students, staff and others to access the most up to date information on recent events and activities throughout the school. Material intended for the web site will be gathered, read and approved by relevant school personnel.

- Particular care will be taken where photographs of pupils are being used on the school website. Personal pupil information including home address and contact details will be omitted from school web pages.
- Pupils will be given the opportunity to publish projects, artwork or any other school work on the World Wide Web.
- Students, staff or others in the school community or associated with it, who publish work on the website will continue to own the copyright on their own work.
- In accordance with the Data Protection Act 1988/2003 the school will only publish student information that is relevant to the context of the web page.

## Sanctions for misuse

- 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.

