

# **ACCEPTABLE USAGE/ REMOTE LEARNING POLICY FOR INTERNET USE**

## **MERCY PRIMARY SCHOOL, BIRR.**

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 Therefore, if the school AUP is not adhered to this privilege will be withdrawn and appropriate sanctions – as outlined in the AUP – will be imposed.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 regularly. Before enrolling, the AUP should be read carefully to ensure that the conditions of use are accepted and understood. It is assumed that the parent accepts the terms of the AUP unless the school is specifically notified.

The first version of the AUP was created on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2009 by Anne Heffernan (Principal), and Emily Kennedy. It was revised to take account of new technologies and social media in 2020, and it was further updated to include Distance Learning.

### **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.
- Filtering software from the PDST.ie is used in order to minimise the risk of exposure to inappropriate material.
- The school will regularly monitor pupils' usage through classroom observation.
- Students and 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.
- The use of personal memory sticks and other digital storage media in school will not be permitted.
- Students will treat others with respect at all times and will not undertake any actions that may bring the school into disrepute. (see Anti-Bullying Procedures)

#### **WORLD WIDE WEB**

- Students will not intentionally visit Internet sites that contain obscene, illegal, hateful or otherwise objectionable materials.
- Students will report accidental accessing of inappropriate materials in accordance with school procedures.
- Students will use the Internet for educational purposes only during class time. During Golden Time, they may be allowed to use the Internet for entertainment purposes. However, all web sites will be vetted by the class teacher. Children cannot use social media accounts or record images, audio or video of other pupils or staff at any time.
- Students will never disclose or publicise personal information.
- Downloading materials or images not relevant to their studies, is in direct breach of the school's acceptable use policy.

- Students 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.

## **EMAIL / INTERNET CHAT**

- Students will not be given access to email, social media, chat rooms, discussion forums, messaging or other electronic communication forms.
- Students will not send or receive any material that is illegal, obscene, defamatory or that is intended to annoy or intimidate another person.
- Students will not reveal their own or other people's personal details, such as passwords, addresses or telephone numbers or pictures.
- Students will never arrange a face-to-face meeting with someone they only know online.
- Students will note that sending and receiving files is subject to permission from their teacher.

## **INTERNET**

Internet has become a two way communication system for the school and the wider community. Services such as SeeSaw, Facebook and other social media are being used by the school to communicate with parents and for parents to communicate with the school. These services, although not owned by Mercy Primary School, form part of our web services and all content placed on these services fall under this policy. Please refer to the school's Data Protection Policy for further information on how the school utilises third party services.

The safety of our children on the web is of utmost importance so the following rules apply to the school and parents. The Internet is open to potential dangers when used inappropriately.

- Many social media sites have minimum age requirements. While the school will not monitor this, we would advise parents to not allow their children to have personal accounts on Facebook, Twitter, etc. until they are the appropriate age. Social media sites will be used by teachers in class, for example, Facebook. However, all interactions will be under the supervision of the teacher. Children will not be allowed to use their own personal accounts for social media.
- Please do not "tag" photographs or any other content which would identify any children or staff in the school.
- If you are uploading a photograph, please ensure that it does not identify the child in any way. Please make sure photograph size is kept as small as possible (no bigger than 1200 pixels).
- Please ensure that online messages and comments to the school are respectful. Messages written on social media are treated in the same way as written messages to the school.
- Avoid negative conversations about children, staff or parents on social media accounts. If you have an issue with something in the school, social media is not the place to raise it. Comments of this nature will be deleted.
- Please do not request to "friend" a member of staff in the school. Most staff would like to keep their personal lives personal. It may be awkward for a staff member to be asked to ignore a Facebook or other social network request.
- Please do not add advertisements to our social media account without prior permission of the principal.
- Failure to keep the above rules will result in a permanent ban to our social media accounts.

## **SCHOOL WEBSITE**

- Please note that the following points apply to the school's website and social media profiles, including but not limited to Facebook.
- 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.
- The website will be regularly checked to ensure that there is no content that compromises the safety of pupils or staff.
- The publication of student work will be co-ordinated by a teacher.
- Pupils' work will appear in an educational context on Web pages and the school's social media.
- The School will endeavour to use digital photographs, audio or video clips focusing on group activities. Photographs, audio and video clips will be used. Video clips will not be password protected.
- Personal pupil information including home address and contact details will be omitted from school web pages.
- 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 – we will not use pupils' name in image file names or ALT tags if published on the web.
- Pupils will continue to own the copyright on any work published.

## **PARENT TEACHER MEETINGS.**

During this school year, 2020-2021, Parents will be contacted by phone to discuss children's progress and needs. Parents will be informed by email that parent teacher meetings will be conducted in this manner and an allocated time and date will subsequently be given to each child. Should the time or date not suit the parent the teacher should be informed immediately by the parent via the child's homework diary and another time slot will be allocated. Staff will phone the parents on their personal mobile phones and will ensure that their caller ID is private.

## **CYBER-BULLYING**

Harassing, flaming, denigrating, impersonating, outing, tricking, excluding and cyber-stalking are all examples of cyber-bullying. Such bullying will not be tolerated in Mercy Primary School  
We advise the following:

1. Our students must not send messages or post comments or photos with the intent of scaring, hurting, or intimidating someone else. Engaging in any online activities intended to harm (physically or emotionally) another person, will result in severe disciplinary action and loss of privileges
1. In some cases, cyber-bullying is a crime.
2. Remember that your activities are monitored and retained.
3. The school will support students, teachers and parents in dealing with cyberbullying. Mercy Primary School is committed to the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (Circular 0081/2017) and will act as required by the Department of Education and Skills, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, the Department of Justice and Equality and the Health Service Executive.

## **PERSONAL DEVICES**

Please see mobile device policy for further information.

## **DISTANCE LEARNING**

We recognise that online collaboration is essential for distance learning and that families are in favour of increased opportunities to maintain the connection between school and home. Mercy Primary School provide access to a variety of online tools, which assist in providing more effective teaching and learning, while also enabling greater communication between staff, families and students. Examples include Seesaw and Zoom.

Seesaw is a digital portfolio tool which allows pupils to store their work in an online space and gain feedback from their teacher. It can be used on a computer (PC), tablet or phone. It effectively enables teachers to set tasks or assignments and include instructions or templates for students to use at home during distance learning. Seesaw is GDPR compliant.

Zoom is a cloud based video conferencing service and provides synchronous video opportunities whereby a staff member directly speaks to the children live – e.g. through a webinar or online meeting.

### **Guidelines for good online communication in Mercy Primary School:**

1. Under no circumstances can pictures or recordings be taken of video calls.
2. Staff, families and students are expected to behave in an appropriate, safe, respectful and kind manner online.
3. It is the duty of parents/guardians to supervise children while they are working online and to ensure any content which they are submitting to their teacher is appropriate.
4. Staff members can communicate with pupils and their families via staff school email addresses or through an established app (eg. Seesaw).
5. Any electronic forms of communication will be for educational purposes and to allow for communication with families.
6. Students and staff will communicate using tools which have been approved by the school and of which parents have been notified (Seesaw, Zoom.)
7. Parental permission will be acquired before setting up a profile for a pupil on a communication forum.
8. For video/Zoom calls, parental permission is implied, as the link to a video call will be communicated via the parent/guardian's email address. Essentially, by virtue of the pupil logging on to the call, permission is assumed.
9. All people involved in zoom meetings will conduct themselves in a similar manner that would be expected in a regular class.
10. The staff member has the right to remove any person being disruptive from a synchronous lesson.
11. A family member is expected to be close by when a pupil is engaging in a meeting. They should monitor all online interactions from the pupil.
12. Staff will not meet any child alone using an online meeting. If there is a need for a meeting between a child with a staff member, another adult must be present at the meeting.
13. While chat may be available in an online meeting, it is the responsibility of the child's family to ensure that any interaction is appropriate. Any interaction from a pupil that could be deemed as inappropriate may result in the child's removal from the lesson, or, where appropriate, a referral to Child Protection services.

14. For security reasons, passwords will be provided to families, where applicable.
15. Mercy Primary School cannot accept responsibility for the security of online platforms, in the event that they are hacked.
16. Communication using a mobile phone will not be frequent, but in the rare exception where it is necessary, staff members will ensure that their caller ID is private.

### **Guidelines for staff members using online communication methods:**

1. Under no circumstances can pictures or recordings be taken of video calls.
2. Staff members will communicate with pupils and families during the hours of 9am - 3pm, where possible.
3. Staff members will have high expectations regarding pupil behaviour, with any communication which takes place online.
4. Staff members will seek to become familiar with apps before using them with pupils.
5. Staff will check that consent has been given, before setting up a pupil profile for an online app.
6. Staff members will report any concerns regarding online behaviour or interactions to school management.
7. Staff are encouraged to generate a new meeting ID and password for each Zoom meeting being held.
8. Staff members will notify parents/guardians of the date, time and password for a video call via email.
9. Staff members will only admit participants to video conferences, if they recognise the email address/username as being connected to a pupil.

### **Rules for pupils using online communication methods:**

For submitting learning:

1. Submit work and pictures that are appropriate - have an adult take a look at your work before you send it.
2. Use kind and friendly words.

For video calls/Zoom:

1. Pictures or recordings of the video call are not allowed.
2. Remember our school rules - they are still in place, even online.
3. Set up your device in a quiet space, with no distractions in the background.
4. Join the video with your microphone muted.
5. Raise your hand before speaking, just like you would do in class.
6. If you have the chance to talk, speak in your normal voice, using kind and friendly words.
7. Show respect by listening to others while they are speaking.
8. Ensure that you are dressed appropriately for the video call.
9. Be on time - set a reminder if it helps.
10. Enjoy! Don't forget to wave hello to everyone when you join!

### **Guidelines for parents and guardians:**

For learning

1. It is the responsibility of parents and guardians to ensure that pupils are supervised while they work online.
2. Check over the work which pupils send to their teacher, ensuring it is appropriate.
3. Continue to revise online safety measures with pupils.

#### For video calls/Zoom

1. Under no circumstances can pictures or recordings be taken of video calls.
2. Ensure that the school has the correct email address for inviting you to join apps and meetings.
3. The main purpose of a video call is to maintain a social connection between the school staff and pupils during school closures. Encourage pupils to listen and enjoy the experience.
4. Be aware that when participating in group video calls, you can be seen and heard unless you are muted or have disabled your camera.
5. You will automatically enter a waiting room when the code for a Zoom call has been entered. Please note that school staff will only accept users into video call if you can be identified by the display name on your zoom account.
6. Please ensure that your child is on time for a scheduled video, or they may be locked out. Please request to join the Zoom call approximately five minutes before the scheduled start time. This will give school staff time to verify your email address.
7. Make sure to familiarise your child with the software in advance. For video in particular, show them how to mute/unmute and turn the camera on/off.
8. Participants in the call should be dressed appropriately.
9. A family member is expected to be close by when a pupil is engaging in a meeting. They should monitor all online interactions from the pupil.
10. An appropriate background/room should be chosen for the video call.
11. For detailed information on GDPR and Zoom, please visit <https://zoom.us/privacy>

It is important to note that any breach of the above guidelines will result in a discontinuation of this method of communication. A breach may also result in a person being immediately removed from a meeting or in a meeting being immediately terminated. In this case, the child's parent will receive a report on the incident.

This is a working document. As we try out new ways of supporting distance learning, the document will be updated.

## LEGISLATION

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

- Data Protection (Amendment) Act 2003.
- Child Trafficking and Pornography Act 1998.
- Children First 2018.
- Interception Act 1993.
- Video Recordings Act 1989.
- The Data Protection Act 1988.

## SUPPORT STRUCTURE

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

## **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.

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management at their meeting on  
Monday 16<sup>th</sup> November via Zoom

Chairperson: *Brian J Kennedy*

Principal: *Barbara Hanamy*