



# Acceptable Use Policy

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## **1. General Approach**

The aim of this Acceptable Use Policy is to ensure that students 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 and access is considered an integral part of teaching and learning. Therefore, if the school AUP is not adhered to agreed sanctions will be imposed.

It is envisaged that school and parent representatives will revise the AUP every two /three years or as necessary. Before agreeing to the contents of this policy during enrolment, the AUP should be read carefully to ensure that the conditions of use are accepted and understood.

When using the internet students, parents and staff are expected:

- To treat others with respect at all times.
- Not undertake any actions that may bring the school into disrepute.
- Respect the right to privacy of all other members of the school community.
- Respect copyright and acknowledge creators when using online content and resources.

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:

- Filtering software and/or equivalent systems will be used in order to minimise the risk of exposure to inappropriate material.
- Uploading and downloading of non-approved software will not be permitted.
- The use of personal external digital storage media in school, requires school permission.
- Virus protection software will be used and updated on a regular basis.
- Internet use within school will always be supervised by a teacher.

This Acceptable Use Policy applies to students who have access to and are users of the internet in St. Mary's B.N.S. .

It also applies to members of staff, volunteers, parents, carers and others who access the internet in St. Mary's B.N.S. .

Misuse of the internet may result in disciplinary action, including written warnings, withdrawal of access privileges, detention and, in extreme cases, suspension or expulsion. The school also reserves the right to report any illegal activities to the appropriate authorities.

St. Mary's B.N.S. will deal with incidents that take place outside the school that impact on the wellbeing of students or staff under this policy and associated Code of Behaviour and Bí Cineálta policies. In such cases St. Mary's B.N.S. will, where known, inform parents/carers

of incidents of inappropriate online behaviour that take place out of school and impose the appropriate sanctions.

St. Mary's B.N.S. implements the following strategies on promoting safer use of the internet:

- Pupils will be provided with education in the area of internet safety as part of our implementation of the SPHE and other curriculum areas.
- Internet safety advice and support opportunities are provided to pupils in St. Mary's B.N.S. through a number of avenues. For example, we may invite a guest speaker to speak to pupils in 5th and 6th class about how to be safe, responsible users of the internet. Information is also shared with the parent body to highlight information and /or events which can support parents in dealing with this area.
- Teachers will be provided with continuing professional development opportunities in the area of internet safety.
- St. Mary's B.N.S. participates in Safer Internet Day activities to promote safer more effective use of the internet.

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed regularly by the following stakeholders:

**Board of Management, teaching staff, support staff, pupils, and parents**

This policy was originally developed by a working group including: Principal, Deputy Principal, teachers, students, parents/carers, and representatives of the Board of Management.

The school will monitor the impact of the policy using:

- Logs of reported incidents.
- Monitoring logs of internet activity (including sites visited).
- Internal monitoring data for network activity.
- Surveys and/or questionnaires of pupils, parents, and teaching staff.

Should serious online safety incidents take place, the Principal should be informed.

The implementation of this Internet Acceptable Use policy will be monitored by all teaching staff.

## **2. Content Filtering**

St. Mary's B.N.S. has chosen to implement the following level on content filtering on the Schools Broadband Network:

**Level 4: 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 belonging to the Social Networking category.**

Students taking steps to by-pass the content filter by using proxy sites or other means may be subject to disciplinary action, including written warnings, withdrawal of access privileges, detention and, in extreme cases, suspension or expulsion.

### **3. Internet Use**

- Students will not intentionally visit internet sites that contain obscene, illegal, hateful or otherwise objectionable materials.
- Students will be encouraged to report accidental accessing of inappropriate materials in accordance with school procedures.
- Students will report accidental accessing of inappropriate materials in school but outside the classroom to their class teacher.
- Students will not copy information into assignments and fail to acknowledge the source (plagiarism and copyright infringement).
- Students 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.
- Students will use the Internet for educational purposes only.
- Students 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.
- Students will not download or view any material that is illegal, obscene, and defamatory or that is intended to annoy or intimidate another person.
- Downloading by students of materials or images not relevant to their studies is in direct breach of the school's acceptable use policy.
- Students will never disclose or publicise personal information or passwords.
- Students 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.
- Use of file sharing and torrent sites is allowed with staff permission only.**

### **4. Email and Messaging**

Downloading by students of materials or images not relevant to their studies is not allowed.

The use of personal email accounts is not allowed at St. Mary's B.N.S. .

Please note, with reference to *school email accounts* below, while pupils may be assigned a school email account for the purpose of setting up a Google Workspace for Education account for pupils in particular classes, the ability to use email is switched off and this function is not available to pupils.

- Students will use approved school email accounts.
- Students should not, under any circumstances, share their email account login details with other pupils.
- Students should not use school email accounts to register for online services such as social networking services, apps, and games.
- Students will use approved class email accounts only under supervision by or permission from a teacher.
- Students will not send any material that is illegal, obscene, and 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 addresses or telephone numbers or pictures.
- Students will never arrange a face-to-face meeting with someone they only know through emails or the internet.
- Students must only use their school email for school related activities and for registering on school based activities only. The use of personal email addresses is not allowed for school based work.
- Students should 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. Pupils should report any such communications to a teacher.
- All communications and opinions expressed in email are the responsibility of the author and do not reflect the opinion of the school.

## **5. Social Media and messaging services for Staff and Students**

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 your school community are expected to follow when using social media.

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.

This policy applies to personal websites such as social networking sites (for example Instagram and TikTok), blogs, mircoblogs such as Twitter, chatrooms, forums, podcasts, open access online encyclopaedias 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.

The following statements apply to the use of messaging, blogging and video streaming services in St. Mary's B.N.S.:

- Use of instant messaging services and apps including Snapchat, WhatsApp, Viber, etc. is not allowed in St. Mary's B.N.S..
- Use of blogs such as WordPress, etc. is allowed in St. Mary's B.N.S. with express permission from teaching staff.
- Use of video streaming sites such as YouTube and Vimeo etc. is allowed with express permission from teaching staff.

All members of the school community must not use social media, messaging services and the internet in any way to harass, impersonate, insult, abuse or defame others.

Staff and students must not discuss personal information about pupils, staff and other members of the St. Mary's B.N.S. community on social media.

Staff and students must not use school email addresses for setting up personal social media accounts or to communicate through such media.

Staff and students must not engage in activities involving social media which might bring St. Mary's B.N.S. into disrepute.

Staff and Students must not represent your personal views as those of being St. Mary's B.N.S. on any social medium.

Students will be provided with guidance on etiquette regarding social media.

Staff are asked to refrain from using/accessing mobile phones during contact time with pupils (whole class, group and/or individuals) and during supervision of pupils (on yard, in classrooms etc).

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>

## **6. Personal Devices**

The following statements apply to the use of internet-enabled devices such as tablets, gaming devices, smartwatches, in St. Mary's B.N.S. :

- Students are not allowed to bring personal internet-enabled devices into St. Mary's B.N.S.
- Students are not allowed to use personal internet-enabled devices during social time or lessons. School devices (e.g. laptops, Chromebooks, iPads etc) will be provided where required.

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

The school uses a number of digital learning platforms e.g. Seesaw from Juniors – 2<sup>nd</sup>; Google Workspace for Education from 3<sup>rd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> etc

- Students must only use their school email for accessing the school digital learning platform e.g. Google Workspace for Education account.
- Only school devices should be used for the purposes of capturing and storing media.
- All school-related media and data should be stored on the school's platform.
- The use of digital platforms should be used in line with considerations set out in the school's data protection plan (GDPR).
- Each user of the platform will be provided with their own unique login credentials.
- Passwords for digital platforms and accounts should not be shared.
- Personal email addresses should not be used when creating accounts on school digital platforms.
- Prior acceptance from parents should be sought for student usage of the schools' digital learning platform. This consent may be captured during the enrolment process.

### **Remote Learning Policy:**

In the event of an unexpected or prolonged school closure where schools have been directed by the Department of Education to engage in Distance Learning or where certain class teachers decide to use online platforms to supplement teaching either in school or at home through the use of online platforms and programmes, St. Mary's Boys' National School will use some or all of the platforms/programmes listed below. Please note this is not an exhaustive list. In all instances, the school's Code of Good Behaviour applies and there are the same expectations around behaviour online as there are offline.

#### ***Aladdin Connect:***

This platform is an extension of the existing Aladdin software in use by the school. Therefore, no permissions from parents are necessary and parents opt in themselves to register for Aladdin Connect and download the app. Aladdin Connect will be used to communicate regularly with families through text/email/memo/homework facility, seek permissions where appropriate, to forward work to children, to receive completed work from children, and to provide feedback. This programme is password protected for both students and teachers.

#### ***IXL:***

This platform may be used by teachers to set online activities in English and Maths. Children may also complete additional activities at their own discretion. Teachers can track a student's achievement. This programme is password protected for both students and teachers.

#### ***Explanatory Videos:***

Links to appropriate videos on youtube, vimeo, IXL, Loom (where the teacher makes their own video using Loom Screencast software), Screencast-O-Matic etc may be shared with

students through Aladdin Connect or other platforms. This is in order to facilitate new learning and to explain work to students without the demonstration/teaching being 'live'. Videos (other than Loom) which are not in the correct format, can be converted to vimeo using the school's vimeo account. This will allow the school to display these videos on the school website or to share links of videos with parents.

***Seesaw:***

Seesaw is a digital portfolio tool which allows pupils to store their work in an online space and gain feedback from their teacher. It is envisaged that pupils from Juniors to 2<sup>nd</sup> class will each have a Seesaw account. It can be used on a computer (PC), laptop or tablet. It effectively enables teachers to set tasks or assignments and include instructions or templates for students to use at home.

***Google Workspace for Education:***

Google Workspace for Education is a suite of Google tools and services that are tailored for schools. Pupils are given their account details for this account in 3<sup>rd</sup> class. It can be used on a computer (PC), laptop or tablet. It effectively enables teachers to set tasks or assignments and include instructions or templates for students to use at home. This platform can also be used for the creation of ePortfolios.

***Zoom and Google Meet:***

Zoom or Google Meet video conferencing may be used to facilitate staff meetings, ISM meetings, SET meetings, Board of Management meetings, school assemblies, prerecorded messages to parents/students and in some cases short check-in meetings with class groups where a parent/guardian must be present with their child/children.

***Live Meeting Protocols:***

By logging your child into a Zoom/Google Meet class meet-up, both parents/guardians and students are automatically agreeing to the following rules and guidelines. If you do not agree with something below, then you should not allow your child to attend. Breach of any of the guidelines below may lead to a student being placed in the waiting room or being removed from the meeting for more serious breaches. The school's Code of Behaviour will apply at all times.

- As long as the pupils are at home, it is the responsibility of parents/ guardians to ensure that they are using digital resources appropriately. Supervision is necessary during live meetings and pupils should be in an appropriate setting in the house.
- Arrive on time for a live meeting on Zoom/Google meet. Screenshots/pictures/video recordings/audio recordings of live meetings by pupils/parents/guardians are strictly prohibited.
- If the teacher wishes to make a video or audio recording (for example of the class singing a song together), the teacher will give any child who does not want to be seen/heard in the video/audio recording the opportunity to switch their video/mic off while the recording is being made. The school will store the video and only use it where appropriate e.g. on the school website (if parental permission received), to celebrate special occasions like graduations, etc.
- Pupils enter the meeting when the host has admitted them from the "Waiting Room".

- Pupils' microphones will be automatically muted upon entry to the meeting. This is to ensure sound quality. Please note that the host can mute and un-mute pupils at any time during the meeting.
- Meetings will be started with participant video on. The host can turn pupils' videos off during the meeting. If the pupil's video is turned off during the meeting, the host cannot automatically restart a pupil's video. The pupil must accept their invitation to restart their video. A pupil can also choose to turn his video off.
- On the top right-hand corner of your screen, you can select "Gallery View" to see all participants.
- Pupils are invited to "raise their hands" if they wish to ask a question.
- Pupils can use the chat feature to ask questions. The host may also share links in the chat feature with pupils. This chat feature is public and is automatically saved after the live meeting. Private chat between pupils is disabled.
- The host may share a whiteboard during the meeting. Pupils can use annotation tools to add information to the whiteboard when asked to do so by the host.
- Dress appropriately in regular daytime clothes.
- Pupils should be courteous, kind and always use appropriate language when working and communicating online.
- If a pupil is mis-behaving, the host can put them in the "Waiting Room". Pupils will have the option of re-joining the meeting after a specified number of minutes. The host also has the option of removing pupils permanently from the meeting.
- Remember that you are in a virtual classroom even though not physically present in the school so normal school rules and Code of Good Behaviour still applies.

By entering a live meeting, it is accepted that the child and you as a parent/guardian agree to follow these procedures.

## **8. Images and Video**

Care should be taken when taking photographic or video images that students are appropriately dressed and are not participating in activities that might bring the individuals or the school into disrepute.

At St. Mary's B.N.S. students must not take, use, share, publish or distribute images of others without their permission.

Taking photos or videos on school grounds or when participating in school activities is only allowed with expressed permission from staff.

Permission from parents or carers is obtained during the enrolment process before photographs of students are published on the school website.

Students 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.

Sharing explicit images and in particular explicit images of students and/or minors is an unacceptable and absolutely prohibited behaviour, with serious consequences and sanctions for those involved. Sharing explicit images of other students automatically incurs suspension as a sanction.

## **9. Inappropriate Activities**

- Promotion or conduct of illegal acts, e.g. under the child protection, obscenity, computer misuse and fraud legislation
- Misuse and fraud legislation
- Racist material
- Pornography
- Promotion of any kind of discrimination
- Promotion of racial or religious hatred
- Harmful content or 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 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 (e.g. 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
- Online gaming
- Online gambling
- Online shopping
- Use of social networking sites, instant messaging and online forums
- Child sexual abuse material
- Any other activity considered questionable

## **10. School Websites**

- Students will be given the opportunity to publish projects, artwork or school work on the internet in accordance with clear policies and approval processes regarding the content that can be loaded to the school's website.
- Students will continue to own the copyright on any work published.

- The website will be regularly checked to ensure that there is no content that compromises the safety, privacy, or reputation of students or staff.
- Webpages allowing comments or user-generated content will be pre-moderated and checked frequently to ensure that they do not contain any inappropriate or offensive content.
- St. Mary's B.N.S. will use only 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.
- The publication of student work will be coordinated by a teacher.
- Personal student information including home address and contact details will not be published on St. Mary's B.N.S. web pages.
- St. Mary's B.N.S. will avoid publishing the first name and last name of pupils in video or photograph captions published online.
- 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 online.

## **11. Cyberbullying**

This type of bullying is increasingly common and is continuously evolving. It is bullying carried out through the use of information and communication technologies such as text, social media, e-mail, messaging, apps, gaming sites, chat-rooms 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 persons sexuality, appearance etc.

Access to technology means that cyberbullying can happen around the clock and the students home may not even be a safe haven from such bullying. Students 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.

In accordance with the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Schools, St. Mary's B.N.S. 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.

When using the internet students, 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 student or member of staff is an unacceptable and absolutely prohibited behaviour, with serious consequences and sanctions for those involved.

Measures are taken by St. Mary's B.N.S. to ensure that staff and students 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 defines cyberbullying as “placing 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.

The prevention of cyberbullying is an integral part of the anti-bullying policy of our school.

## **12. Legislation**

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

- [Circular 0044/2025](#) - Banning the use of and access to personal mobile phones by pupils during the school day
- Data Protection Acts 1988 to 2018 and General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)
- Copyright and Related Rights Act 2000
- Child Trafficking and Pornography Act 1998 and Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017
- Children First Act 2015
- Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2020 (Coco’s Law)
- Criminal Damage Act 1991

### *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.

### *Sanctions*

Misuse of the Internet and digital technologies is 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 Síochána.

During the enrolment process in St. Mary's BNS each parent agrees to follow the school's Acceptable Use Policy on the use of the internet and digital technologies in our school. By accepting the terms of our Acceptable Use Policy during enrolment, each parent and pupil agrees to use the internet and digital technologies in a responsible way and obey all the procedures outlined in the policy.

When each parent agrees to follow the conditions in our AUP, they indicate that they understand that every reasonable precaution has been taken by the school to provide for online safety but the school cannot be held responsible if students access unsuitable websites.

### **13. Ratification and Communication**

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management of the above school on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2022.

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Chairperson, Board of Management