

St. Louis Grammar School, Ballymena

POLICY FOR THE ACCEPTABLE USE OF THE INTERNET

The Internet

The Internet is an electronic information highway connecting many thousands of computers all over the world and millions of individual subscribers. This global “network of networks” is not governed by any entity. This means that there are no limits or checks on the kind of information that is maintained by, and accessible to, Internet users. The educational value of appropriate information on the Internet is substantial. Because, however, the Internet is composed of information from a vast array of sources world-wide, it includes some material that is not of educational value in the context of the school. This material includes information which may be inaccurate, abusive, profane, sexually oriented, racist or illegal. In order to guard young people from any inherent dangers, it is the joint responsibility of school staff and the parent or guardian of each pupil to educate the pupil about his or her responsibility when using the Internet.

Our school has been provided with access to the Internet, electronic mail and on-line computer conferencing. In order to maximise the benefits of the service and to help minimise any risks which might arise from Internet use, filtering software has been installed which operates by blocking thousands of inappropriate web sites and by barring inappropriate items, terms and searches in both the Internet and email. Nonetheless, no filtering service can be completely foolproof, and the only sure way to ensure that users behave in a responsible manner is for schools and other users to provide education in acceptable use of these resources, backed by clear policy guidelines.

1. STAFF AND PUPILS

- a. When using the Internet, all users must comply with all copyright, libel, fraud, discrimination and obscenity laws, and all school staff (both teachers and support staff) are expected to communicate in a professional manner consistent with the rules of behaviour governing employees in the education sector.
- b. Pupils are responsible for their good behaviour on the school networks, just as they are on and off school premises. While the use of information and communication technologies is a required aspect of the statutory Northern Ireland Curriculum, access to the Internet remains a privilege and not a right. It is given to pupils who act in a considerate and responsible manner, and will be withdrawn if they fail to maintain acceptable standards of use. Unintentional discovery of inappropriate material should be reported immediately to a staff supervisor.
- c. Staff should ensure that pupils know and understand that no Internet user is permitted to:
 - retrieve, send, copy or display offensive messages or pictures;

- use obscene or racist language;
- harass, insult or attack others;
- damage computers, computer systems or computer networks;
- violate copyright laws;
- use another user's password;
- trespass in another user's folders, work or files;
- intentionally waste resources (such as on-line time and consumables);
- use the network for unapproved commercial purposes.

The above information will be clearly displayed at all Internet points.

- d. All use of the Internet should be in support of the aims and objectives of the Northern Ireland Curriculum.

2. LOCATION AND SUPERVISION

- a. The school will ensure that access to the Internet provided to staff and pupils in any school or educational institution through the Internet Service Provider is a filtered service. All pupils must record the name, date time and purpose of search before access. All users should be aware that the school can and does track and record the sites visited, the searches made on the Internet and e-mail sent and received by individual users. Violations of the Internet Policy detected by the tracking process will be investigated only by the Principal or his designated member of Staff.
 - b. Internet access for pupils in schools is available only on computers that are in highly-used areas of the school such as classrooms, or the library. Machines which are connected to the Internet will be in full view of people circulating in the area.
 - c. While using the Internet at school, pupils will, where possible, be supervised. However, when appropriate, pupils may pursue electronic research independent of staff supervision if they have been granted permission and with the permission of their parents. In all cases, pupils will be reminded of their responsibility to use these resources in line with the school policy on acceptable use.
 - d. The school will ensure that all pupils understand how they are to use the Internet appropriately and why the rules exist.
 - e. Network administrators may review files and communications to maintain system integrity and ensure that users are using the system responsibly. While normal privacy is respected and protected by password controls, as with the Internet itself, users must not expect files to be absolutely private.
3. Electronic information-handling skills are now fundamental to the preparation of citizens and future employees in the Information Age. Staff should be encouraged to investigate the possibilities provided by access to this electronic information and communication resource, and blend its use, as appropriate, within the curriculum. They should model appropriate and effective use, and provide guidance and instruction to pupils in the acceptable use of the Internet.

4. *EXAMPLES OF ACCEPTABLE AND UNACCEPTABLE USE*

a. On-line activities which are encouraged include, for example:

- the use of email and computer conferencing for communication between colleagues, between pupil(s) and teacher(s), between pupil(s) and pupil(s), between schools and industry;
- use of the Internet to investigate and research school subjects, cross-curricular themes and topics related to social and personal development;
- use of the Internet to investigate careers and Further and Higher education;
- the development of pupils' competence in ICT skills and their general research skills.

b. On-line activities which are **not permitted** include, for example:

- searching, viewing and/or retrieving materials that are not related to the aims of the curriculum or future careers;
- copying, saving and/or redistributing copyright protected material, without approval;
- subscribing to any services or ordering any goods or services, unless specifically approved by the school;
- playing computer games or using other interactive 'chat' sites, unless specifically assigned by the teacher;
- using the network in such a way that use of the network by other users is disrupted (for example: downloading large files during peak usage times; sending mass email messages);
- publishing, sharing or distributing any personal information about a user (such as: home address; email address; phone number, etc.);
- any activity that violates the School Code of Discipline.

5. *ADVICE FOR PARENTS*

a. While in school, teachers will guide pupils toward appropriate materials on the Internet. Outside school, parents or guardians bear the same responsibility for such guidance as they would normally exercise with information sources such as television, telephones, movies, radio and other media.

b. Appropriate home use of the Internet by children can be educationally beneficial, and can make a useful contribution to home and school work. It should, however, be supervised, and parents should be aware that they are responsible for their children's use of Internet resources at home.

c. We will offer advice to parents about good practice and we will therefore advise parents that they provide filtered and monitored access to the Internet for pupils, and consider drawing to their attention appropriate guidance and advice on its use which they might find helpful at home.

d. Such guidance and advice will include the following:

- parents should discuss with their children the rules for using the Internet and decide together when, how long, and what comprises appropriate use;
- parents should get to know the sites their children visit, and talk to them about what they are learning;
- parents should ensure that they give their agreement before their children give out personal identifying information in any electronic communication on the Internet, such as a picture, an address, a phone number, the school name, or financial information such as credit card or bank details. In this way they can protect their children (and themselves) from unwanted or unacceptable overtures from strangers, from unplanned expenditure and from fraud;
- parents should encourage their children not to respond to any unwelcome, unpleasant or abusive messages, and to tell them if they receive any such messages or images. If the message comes from an Internet service connection provided by the school, they should immediately inform the school.

ANNEX

1.. Advice for Parents

Free advice for parents is available from the following sources:

Parents' Information Network, PIN, PO Box 16394, London SE1 3ZP
(<http://www.pin-parents.com>) Tel: 0891 633 644.

Schools can order, in bulk and for the cost of delivery, free independent PIN guides to distribute to parents on the topics of buying computers, software and the Internet, and using computers at home to support homework.

NCH Action for Children: Central Office, NCH Action for Children, 85 Highbury Park,

London N5 1UD (<http://www.nchafc.org.uk/internet/index.html>) Tel: 0171
226 2033