



Acceptable Use Policy for pupils and parents/guardians



St Mary's Primary School
St Mary's Road, Edenderry, Co.Offaly

The aim of this Acceptable Use Policy [AUP] is to ensure that pupils will benefit from learning opportunities offered by the school's technological and internet resources in a safe and effective manner. Access to the internet/technology is considered a school resource and privilege. Therefore, if the school's AUP is not adhered to, this privilege will be withdrawn and appropriate sanctions - as outlined in the AUP and/or Code of Behaviour - will be imposed.

This policy, along with the *Acceptable Use Policy for staff members*, aims to provide guidance with regard to the acceptable use of ICT by all members of the school community. It does so in light of the school's *Digital Learning Plan* and in conjunction with the school's *Remote Learning Policy*.

It is envisaged that school and parent representatives will revise AUPs regularly. The terms of this AUP should be read carefully to ensure that the conditions of use are understood and accepted.

This AUP was created in January 2009 and most recently reviewed and updated in September 2024, in consultation with school and parent representatives.

SCHOOL STRATEGY

The school will employ a number of strategies in order to maximize learning opportunities and reduce risks associated with the internet. Broadly, these strategies involve monitoring, filtering, educating the children and adhering to our Acceptable Use Policy. Specifically, they are as follows:

GENERAL:

- Students are expected to follow the same rules for good behaviour and respectful conduct online as offline (as outlined in St Mary's Primary School's Code of Behaviour).
- St Mary's Primary School avails of content filtering at Level 4 of the Schools Broadband Programme in order to minimize the risk of exposure to inappropriate material.
- During the school day pupils may use only school devices as directed by their teachers. (For more information, please see the school's *Mobile Phone and Electronic Device Policy*.)
- Students are expected to treat all school devices with respect and care.

INTERNET:

- Internet sessions will always be supervised by a teacher.
- Students will seek permission before entering any internet site, unless previously approved by a teacher.
- Students will not intentionally visit sites that contain obscene, illegal, hateful or otherwise objectionable materials. Pupils must report accidental accessing of any inappropriate sites, etc. to their teachers immediately.
- Teachers will be made aware of internet safety issues.
- Students will receive training in the area of internet safety.
- Websites that the children use in school will be previewed by their teachers before use (and subject to the filters operated by the Schools Broadband Programme).
- The use of personal memory sticks, CD/DVD ROMs, etc. will require a teacher's permission.
- Virus protection software will be used and updated on a regular basis.
- Uploading and downloading of non-approved software will not be permitted.
- Students must never disclose or publicise personal information.
- Students must observe good "netiquette" (etiquette on the internet) at all times and will not undertake any action that may bring the school into disrepute.
- Students will become familiar with copyright issues relating to online learning.

E-MAIL:

- Children's use of email will be facilitated strictly in an educational context and access to personal email accounts is prohibited.
- Online tasks that involve sending/receiving mail (e.g. with partner schools, educational email tasks) will be teacher-led. Students will only use approved class email accounts under supervision by or with permission from a teacher. Only teachers will know the passwords to such email accounts. All emails will be reviewed by teachers prior to opening or sending.
- Students must not send or receive any material that is illegal, obscene, defamatory or that is intended to annoy or intimidate another person.
- Students must never disclose or publicise personal information regarding themselves or others (e.g. addresses, telephone numbers or pictures).
- Students will never arrange a face-to-face meeting with someone via school e-mail.
- Sending or receiving e-mail attachments is subject to teacher permission.

INTERNET CHAT/INSTANT MESSAGING SERVICES/APPS:

- Students are not permitted to use Internet Chat Rooms. (Discussion Forums between schools may be arranged from time to time.)
- The use of all instant messaging services or apps including Snapchat, WhatsApp, etc. by pupils is strictly forbidden in school or on any school devices.

SCHOOL WEBSITE/SOCIAL MEDIA PROFILES/BLOGS:

- Students will be given an opportunity to have projects, artwork or schoolwork published on the school website and/or social media pages.
- The publication of students' work will be coordinated by teachers.
- Pupils will continue to own the copyright on any work published.
- Personal pupil information including home addresses and contact details will not be published on the school website/social media pages/blogs.

- Attempts will be made to avoid publishing the last name of individuals in photographs.
- Digital photographs, video clips and audio clips of children will focus on groups and group activities rather than on individual students where possible.
- Sometimes individual photographs/video clips/audio clips may be appropriate (e.g. for notable sporting/academic achievements). Content focusing on individual pupils will be published on the school website/social media pages only with parental permission.
- Access to social networking sites (such as, but not limited to, Instagram, Facebook and TikTok) by pupils in school is forbidden and blocked by the Schools Broadband Programme.

CYBERBULLYING:

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. Cyberbullying involves the use of ICT (usually a mobile phone or the internet). Even the posting of one offensive comment online is considered cyberbullying, due to its potential to be circulated to many users (i.e. repeated).

- Pupils are expected to treat others with respect at all times when using any form of technology, either as part of school-related learning or for personal use outside of school.
- At St Mary's Primary School we take bullying of any member of the school community – pupils, school staff and members of the wider school community – very seriously. Pupils, parents and staff members are urged to report all incidents of cyberbullying to school management as soon as possible.
- All reports of cyberbullying will be noted, investigated and addressed in accordance with the relevant school policies (e.g. the Anti-bullying Policy). If necessary, appropriate sanctions will be imposed (see 'Sanctions' below).

ONLINE LESSONS AND RECORDINGS:

Under no circumstances should online lessons (either live or pre-recorded) be recorded or shared with anyone other than those for whom they were originally intended (unless written permission has been received from the teacher or staff member in question).

EDUCATION:

- Students, teachers and occasionally parents will receive training in the area of internet safety.
- Pupils and staff members will mark Safer Internet Day each year.
- Students will be educated about the benefits and risks associated with using the internet.
- The children at St Mary's Primary School will be made aware of the importance of keeping their personal information private.
- Students will learn about the importance of informing/telling someone they trust if they feel unsafe or if they discover something unpleasant.
- The children will learn about the importance of treating ICT equipment with care, consideration and respect.

PERSONAL DEVICES:

With regard to the use of mobile phones and other electronic devices, all members of the school community must adhere to the terms of the school's *Mobile Phone and Electronic Device Policy*. The following are in direct breach of the school's AUP:

- Pupils using their own personal devices on the school premises or during offsite/after-school activities (e.g. school trips, sporting events, Homework Club, etc.).
- Pupils sending nuisance text messages.
- The unauthorised taking of images or recordings with a camera on a mobile phone or other device.

PARENTS/GUARDIANS/VISITORS TO THE SCHOOL:

- Parents/guardians must not use social media or the internet in any way to harass, insult, abuse or defame pupils, their family members, staff or other members of the school community.
 - Any queries or problems parents/guardians might have should not be posted on Facebook, Twitter, etc. or sent to the school via Messenger. They should be brought directly to the attention of your child's teacher or, following this, the school principal, as and when appropriate.
 - Parents/guardians or other visitors to the school should not upload images or videos featuring pupils or staff of St Mary's Primary School to any social media platform. This includes images from in-school concerts, events, etc.
 - Parents/guardians must not take, use, share, publish or distribute images of any member of St Mary's school community without their expressed permission.
 - Parents/guardians must not engage in activities involving social media or any form of communications technology which could bring St Mary's Primary School into disrepute.
 - Parents/guardians must not represent their own personal views as those of St Mary's Primary School on any social medium.
 - Parents/guardians should ensure that their children adhere to the minimum age requirements for the use of messaging services and social networks.
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- Parents/Guardians may contact their children's teachers using their @stmaryspsedenderry.ie email addresses. Due to the volume of emails and messages typically received, please be aware that it is not always possible or appropriate to answer each message individually or in a particular timeframe. Teachers will respond or take action as and when appropriate, taking into consideration the urgency of the matter, the need for third parties to be informed/consulted and the teachers' right to disconnect. Where possible, please reserve such communication for urgent matters.
 - If online parent-teacher meetings or phone calls are necessary, the recording or sharing of such communication is strictly prohibited. Only the parent(s)/guardian(s) and the teacher of a child should be present at these meetings, unless otherwise agreed in advance of the meeting.

LEGISLATION:

If required/requested to do so, the school will provide information on legislation relating to use of the Internet. Parents, students and teachers should familiarise themselves with:

- Data Protection Act 1988
- Video Recordings Act 1989
- Interception Act 1993
- Child Trafficking and Pornography Act 1998
- Data Protection (Amendment) Act 2003
- Anti-Bullying Guidelines for Primary Schools 2013

SUPPORT STRUCTURES:

Internet safety advice is available for students and parents at the following websites:

- www.webwise.ie
- www.pdsttechnologyineducation.ie
- www.scoilnet.ie

SANCTIONS:

Misuse of the internet or technology (including cyberbullying or discrediting others) may result in disciplinary action as per the school's *Code of Behaviour* and/or *Anti-Bullying Policy*, including:

- verbal warnings,
- written warnings (in the form of notes to parents),
- withdrawal of access privileges (either short-term or long-term), and
- suspension or expulsion (in extreme cases).

The school also reserves the right to report any illegal or inappropriate activities to the relevant authorities (e.g. An Garda Síochána, Tusla, Office of the Data Commissioner, etc.).

RATIFICATION:

This version of the *Acceptable Use Policy (for pupils and parents/guardians)* was ratified by the Board of Management of St Mary's Primary School on November 14th 2024 and will be reviewed in due course.



Mr Oliver Hickey, Chairperson of the Board of Management

Parents/Guardians will be asked to agree to the terms of the AUP online from now on. They will receive a link to the AUP along with a brief explanation and the following questions:

1.

Child/Children's name(s): _____

2.

Child's current class and teacher: (Select all that apply)

3.

Please confirm the following:

As the parent or legal guardian of the above pupil(s), I understand that every reasonable precaution has been taken by the school to provide for online safety but that the school cannot be held responsible if pupils accidentally or deliberately access inappropriate material. I understand and agree to all the terms of the *Acceptable Use Policy for pupils and parents/guardians*.

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4.

I have discussed the contents of the school's *Acceptable Use Policy for pupils and parents/guardians* with my child(ren) and hereby confirm that they are agreeable to use the internet in a responsible way and obey all rules explained to them and/or set out in the *Acceptable Use Policy for pupils and parents/guardians*. Click the box below to agree and to submit your responses.

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5.

Please write your name in lieu of your signature. _____