



St. Brigid's Girls' National School

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Acceptable Use Policy regarding Internet Use

Aim:

The aim of this Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) is to ensure that pupils will benefit from learning opportunities offered by St. Brigid's internet resources in a safe and effective manner. Internet use and access is considered a school resource, which may be used if deemed appropriate by the individual teacher. It is also considered a privilege. Therefore, if St. Brigid's AUP is not adhered to this privilege will be withdrawn and appropriate sanctions – as outlined in the AUP – will be imposed. Pupil internet access is supervised at all times and is intended for educational purposes. While every reasonable precaution will be taken by the school to provide for online safety, the school cannot be held responsible if pupils access unsuitable websites or material, or use them inappropriately.

Rationale:

The rationale of this policy is to give guidance and direction for the acceptable use of ICT for teaching and learning and communication as appropriate for all members of the school community in a safe and effective manner. This Acceptable Use Policy applies to:

1. Pupils who have access to and are users of the internet in St. Brigid's GNS.
2. Members of staff, volunteers, parents, carers, and others who access the internet in St. Brigid's Senior School.
3. To all school personnel who use digital tools in remote teaching and learning.

Internet use and access is considered a school resource and privilege. If the school AUP is not adhered to, this privilege will be withdrawn and appropriate sanctions as outlined in the AUP and the school's Code of behaviour will be imposed.

School Strategies:

The following strategies will be employed by St. Brigid's G.N.S in order to maximise learning opportunities and reduce the risks associated with the Internet.

General:

- ❖ The AUP will be made available to all members of the school community through the policy section of the school website. Parents/guardians will be made aware of the availability of the AUP.
- ❖ A teacher will always supervise Internet sessions.
- ❖ Filtering software and/or equivalent systems will be used in order to minimise the risk of exposure to inappropriate material.
- ❖ The Irish Schools' Broadband Programme provides an integrated set of services to schools which includes broadband connectivity and services including content filtering, webhosting, and security services. These services are managed by the NCTE working closely with the Department of Education and Skills and are coordinated and supported by the NCTE Service Desk which is the single point of contact for schools for all broadband related issues, providing information, advice and support to schools.
- ❖ Pupil's Internet usage will be regularly monitored.

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- ❖ 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 devices, personal digital storage media and personal software in school is not permitted.
- ❖ Pupils will observe good ‘netiquette’ (i.e. etiquette on the Internet) at all times and will not undertake any actions that may bring the school into disrepute.
- ❖ The use of social networking sites in school e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram etc. is strictly forbidden.
- ❖ Subject to the main policy below, St. Brigid’s G.N.S email system is primarily for business use.
- ❖ Teacher’s Internet usage will be for educational purposes.
- ❖ When using the internet, pupils, parents and staff are expected:
 - ❖ To treat others with respect at all times
 - ❖ Not to undertake any actions that may bring the school into disrepute.
 - ❖ Respect the right to privacy of all other members of the school community.
 - ❖ Misuse of the internet may result in disciplinary action, including written warnings, withdrawal of access, and in extreme cases, suspension or expulsion. The school also reserves the right to report any illegal activities to the appropriate authorities.

Cyber-bullying

Cyberbullying in any form is a very serious issue and will not be tolerated. Any pupil who experiences cyberbullying must report it appropriately (e.g. to their parents, An Garda Síochána and/or to school authorities). Any report of cyberbullying will be taken seriously by the school authorities and the school’s Anti-Bullying Policy will be followed. Sanctions will be applied and guidance offered to pupils involved in cyber-bullying, in the interest of their well-being.

As per our Code of Behaviour, the bullet points below are listed as Gross Misbehaviours:

- Impersonating, commenting, mentioning by name and/or referencing any staff member on any platform/online website. e.g.: to make a staff member easily identifiable.
- Taking, sharing, manipulating, publishing or distributing 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.
- Creating, transmitting, displaying, publishing, or forwarding any material that is likely to harass, cause offence to any person or bring the school into disrepute.
- Transmitting, recording, or bringing to school any digital material that may be offensive or injurious to any member of the school community.

Pupils, parents, and staff are expected to treat others with respect at all times. Pupils must not take, use, share, manipulate, publish or distribute images, videos or other content online with the another member of the school community regardless of whether this happens in school or outside.

Students must not create, transmit, display publish or forward any material that is likely to harass, cause offence to any person or bring the school into disrepute. St. Brigid’s G.N.S. reserves the right to protect the reputation of the school. Engaging in online activities with the intention to harm, harass, or embarrass another pupil or member of staff is an unacceptable and absolutely prohibited behaviour, with serious consequences and sanctions for those involved.

The prevention of cyber bullying is an integral part of the anti-bullying policy of our school and discussed as part of the Stay Safe programme in addition to other key areas of the curriculum (See Social Personal and Health Education Policy e.g. Fuse Programme, webwise.ie etc.).

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(See School Code of Behaviour: ‘Transmitting, recording or bringing to school any digital material that may be offensive or injurious to any member of the school community’, is considered to be a gross breach of discipline and could lead to suspension.)

This policy applies to personal websites such as social networking sites (for example Instagram and TikTok), blogs, microblogs 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. This list is not exhaustive. The internet is a fast moving technology and it is impossible to cover all circumstances or emerging media.

World Wide Web:

- ❖ Websites will be previewed and evaluated by a teacher before providing pupil access.
- ❖ Pupils will only have access to websites which a teacher has previously book marked in the Favourites Folder. Pupils will not be permitted to type a website URL in the address bar.
- ❖ Pupils will not intentionally visit Internet sites that contain illegal, obscene, hateful or otherwise objectionable materials.
- ❖ Teachers will monitor what is being viewed on the World Wide Web and the ICT co-ordinator will regularly monitor Internet usage.
- ❖ Teachers will be familiar with copyright issues related to online learning. Pupils will not copy information into assignments.
- ❖ A record will be kept of pupils allocated to each PC during Internet access.
- ❖ Pupils will use the Internet for educational purposes only and online learning will be directed and task-oriented.
- ❖ Pupils will never disclose or publicise personal information in relation to themselves or others.
- ❖ Downloading by pupils of materials or images not relevant to their studies, as directed by their teacher, is in direct breach of this Acceptable Use Policy.
- ❖ Any pupil who accidentally encounters illegal and/or inappropriate material must switch off their monitor immediately and report it to the teacher.
- ❖ Pupils 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.
- ❖ It is strictly forbidden for pupils to delete the work or files of other pupils from folders on the school network. It is strictly forbidden for any pupil to attempt any act of hacking or other form of sabotage that could compromise the security of the school’s network and digital data. Any such action will result in a serious sanction being imposed, as per the school’s Code of Behaviour.
- ❖ Pupils will not complete or send forms online without permission from the teacher.
- ❖ Pupils will not sign visitor guest books on any website.

Email:

- ❖ Pupils will not be permitted to send personal emails. The class teacher may send class emails.
- ❖ Pupils will not be permitted to send emails from home to the school email address.
- ❖ Pupils will not email the teacher directly, only through parents account.
- ❖ Teachers only will open emails and will not open attachments when the sender is unknown.
- ❖ Pupils will not send or receive material that is illegal, obscene, defamatory or that is intended to annoy or intimidate another person.
- ❖ Pupils will not reveal their own or other’s personal details such as addresses, telephone numbers or pictures.
- ❖ Pupils will never arrange a face-to-face meeting with someone they only know through emails or the Internet.
- ❖ Pupils will not be permitted to access any social networking sites.

Social Media:

Internet Chat:

- ❖ Pupils will only have access to chat rooms, discussion forums, messaging or other electronic communication forms that have been approved by the school.
- ❖ Chat rooms, discussion forums and other electronic communication forums will only be used for educational purposes and will always be supervised.
- ❖ Usernames will be used to avoid disclosure of identity.
- ❖ Face-to-face meetings with someone organised via Internet chat will be forbidden.
- ❖ Pupils will not attempt at any time to connect with any member of staff on that staff member's own personal social media account(s). Parents/guardians will be informed should this occur. Should issues persist the school's Code of Behaviour will be invoked.
- ❖ Staff and pupils must not use social media and the internet in any way to harass, insult, abuse or defame pupils, their family members, staff other members of St. Brigid's GNS School community.
- ❖ Staff and pupils must not discuss personal information about pupils, staff and other members of St. Brigid's school community on social media. Similarly, it is asked that parents avoid negative conversations about children, staff or parents on social media accounts. With this in mind, we ask that parents ensure that emails sent to school staff are respectful in nature.

Usage of school's computers, network and internet facilities by staff:

- ❖ Staff utilise the school's computers, networks and Internet services for school-related and educational purposes only.
- ❖ Teachers are provided with IT devices for teaching and learning of pupils and requisite school planning. The use of these devices is restricted to the above purpose only.
- ❖ Staff is made aware that Internet traffic can be monitored and traced to the individual user. Discretion and professional conduct is essential.
- ❖ Staff is expected to use appropriate judgment and caution in communications concerning pupils and staff to ensure that personally identifiable information remains confidential.
- ❖ Copyright, intellectual property rights and the correct usage of published materials will be respected.
- ❖ Email and or Aladdin, are used to communicate to others on work-related matters

Consequences of inappropriate usage by staff:

- ❖ Should the user's conduct in relation to the use of email, internet or web browsing be deemed inappropriate (by the Administrator, the I.T. Co-ordinator, the Principal or Board of Management) a thorough investigation will take place.
- ❖ Failure to comply with this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including expulsion or dismissal in accordance with the DES Circular 60/2009.

Social Media Guidelines:

- ❖ These guidelines and A.U.P. have been developed to assist all employees of St. Brigid's GNS (hereinafter referred to as "the School") in making ethical, respectful and acceptable decisions about their professional and personal social media usage and to provide clear direction on the importance of protecting the School's reputation and confidential information.
- ❖ Social media refers to social and professional networking platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, YouTube, LinkedIn, Snapchat, Instagram, blogs, message boards and forums and other similar online facilities. This list is not exhaustive.

- ❖ The guidelines and A.U.P. are not intended to prevent employees from engaging in social media but are intended to inform employees as to what is considered by the School to constitute appropriate / inappropriate social media usage and conduct.
- ❖ For those employees who are members of the School’s teaching staff, the guidelines and A.U.P. give effect to agreed professional protocols as prescribed by the Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers (Teaching Council, June 2012) which provides that teachers should: -
 - “ensure that any communication with pupils/students, colleagues, parents, school management and others is appropriate, including communication via electronic media, such as email, texting and social networking sites.”
 - and
 - “ensure that they do not knowingly access, download or otherwise have in their possession while engaged in school activities, inappropriate materials/images in electronic or other format.”
- ❖ All employees should be mindful of what they post on social media, who can see it and how it can be linked back to the School and work colleagues. Misuse of social media can cause injury to others and can have a negative impact on the reputation of the School. Social media communications are never truly private and once information is published it becomes part of a permanent record.
- ❖ Employees (including substitute teachers, SNAs, volunteers, coaches, student teachers) are at all times prohibited from using or publishing information on social media which has the potential to negatively impact / reflect on the School and / or its employees and / or its students e.g.: -
 - publishing defamatory, abusive or offensive material concerning any employee, volunteer, member of School management, parent(s), student(s), visitor or other member of the School community;
 - publishing any confidential or sensitive information concerning the School or members of the School community;
 - publishing material related to any pupil of St. Brigid’s GNS and/or their time/role spent in St. Brigid’s GNS.
- ❖ The School reserves the right to take disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal, in respect of employees who engage in prohibited conduct and conduct in breach of this policy.
- ❖ Given the ever developing and changing nature of social media and the internet the within guidelines and policy will be reviewed and adapted as required.
- ❖ This policy should be read in conjunction with staff policies which are applicable to social media usage, in particular the Adult Anti-Bullying Policy, data protection, the Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers and other and disciplinary policies and procedures.

Social Media Usage on a Social Media Site or Profile Established in the Course of Employment which relates to School Business/Matters:

- ❖ Responsibility: A permitted employee is responsible for his/her social media usage, for ensuring that private and confidential information is respected and protected at all times and for compliance with the terms and conditions of the relevant social media platform.
- ❖ Privacy & Confidential information: Confidential information pertaining to the School, its employees, volunteers, students, parents and others in the School community must be respected and maintained at all times. Personal information about any students, parents, employees or volunteers must not be divulged or discussed on social media sites.
- ❖ Unacceptable use: Employees must not create, publish, download or communicate material/content that could reasonably be regarded as defamatory, inappropriate, discriminatory, offensive, hostile, pornographic, damaging to the School’s reputation or referring to a third person without their permission. Uploading, forwarding or linking to the aforementioned content is also unacceptable. Employees must never reveal sensitive details whether relating to the School, its employees, volunteers, students, parents and other members of the School community on social media sites.
- ❖ Behaviour: Postings by an employee on a social media site that are defamatory, inappropriate, discriminatory, offensive, hostile, pornographic, divulging personal data without consent or

damaging to the School's reputation will be addressed pursuant to the School's disciplinary procedure and may result in disciplinary sanction up to and including dismissal.

Personal Social Media Usage:

- ❖ **Boundaries:** Personal profiles are not to be used to conduct school business or to communicate with students/parents. Online interaction with management, other employees and/or school contacts should be appropriate and professional in nature. Employees must not use the official School e-mail address when participating in personal social media/social media that is not related to the employee's job. Personal use of social media must not occur during working time but is restricted to break times at work.
- ❖ **Identity:** Where an employee chooses to identify him/herself on social media as an employee of the School, s/he must make it clear that their communications do not represent the School, its ethos, position, opinions or views. The employee must write in the first person and state clearly s/he is posting in a personal capacity and not in the course of employment or on behalf of the School and state clearly that the views expressed are his/her own and not those of the School. Employees should at all times be mindful of their communications and possible consequences.
- ❖ **Be mindful and respectful:** Employees must be mindful that their conduct not only reflects on themselves but also reflects on their professionalism and the School. Employees should exercise sound judgement, common sense and respect when participating in social media. Employees should not use insulting, offensive or disparaging language. If in doubt, don't publish or post anything. Information published online is permanent and never completely private.
- ❖ **Responsibility:** Employees are personally responsible for their posts and actions on social media.
- ❖ **Privacy & Confidential information:** The obligations detailed above apply also to employees' personal social media usage. Do not divulge or discuss confidential information pertaining to the School, its employees, volunteers, students, parents and others in the School community and personal information, including photographs, of third persons (including employees, students, parents and other members of the School community), must not be posted, divulged or discussed.
- ❖ **Unacceptable use:** Employees must not create, publish, download or communicate material/content that could reasonably be regarded as defamatory, inappropriate, discriminatory, offensive, hostile, pornographic, damaging to the School's reputation or referring to a third person without their permission. Uploading, forwarding or linking to the aforementioned content is also unacceptable. Employees must never reveal sensitive details whether relating to the School, its employees, volunteers, students, parents and other members of the School community on social media sites.
- ❖ **Behaviour:** Postings by an employee on a social media site that are defamatory, inappropriate, discriminatory, offensive, hostile, pornographic, divulging personal data without consent or bring the School into disrepute will be addressed pursuant to the School's disciplinary procedure and may result in disciplinary sanction up to and including dismissal.

Reporting:

Employees should immediately report to the Principal / Deputy Principal any inappropriate, abusive or defamatory or other unacceptable social media activity concerning the School, its employees, volunteers, students or other members of the School community. Such reports will be fully and confidentially investigated, the reported activity will be reviewed and, where appropriate, the content will be reported using the relevant online reporting mechanism.

Web Cams:

- ❖ Web Cams will only be used under strict supervision
- ❖ Prior written permission must be given by parents/guardians before pupils can use web cams.

School Website:

- ❖ Written permission must be given by parents/guardians before pupils' projects, artwork or schoolwork may be published on the school web site.
- ❖ The publication of pupil work will be co-ordinated by a teacher.
- ❖ Pupil's work will appear in an educational context on Web pages with a copyright notice prohibiting the copying of such work without express written permission.
- ❖ The school will endeavour to use digital photographs, audio or video clips focusing on group activities. Content focusing on individual pupils will not be published on the school website without the parental/guardian permission. Video clips may be password protected.
- ❖ Personal pupil information such as home address and contact details will be omitted from school web pages.
- ❖ The school website will avoid publishing the full names of individuals in a photograph.
- ❖ The school will ensure that the image files are appropriately named – will not use pupils' names in image file names or ALT tags if published on the web.
- ❖ Pupils will continue to own the copyright on any work published
- ❖ The school's Website Privacy Statement and Data Protection Policies are available on the school website under the Home tab.

Recordings:

- ❖ Only recordings permitted by a teacher are allowed. Pupils are forbidden from using any device, for example mobile phones, to make an unauthorised recording of any sort in class, on a school outing or as part of a school activity.
- ❖ Pupils may be digitally recorded for educational purposes throughout their time in St. Brigid's GNS. Such purposes include classroom-based learning, extra-curricular activities and participation in educational activities and outings.
- ❖ Recordings will be made on school devices under the supervision of a teacher and due care will be taken to store recordings securely on the device and on the school's network. This includes both subject-related recordings and recordings of extra-curricular activities in which pupils are engaged.
- ❖ All recordings will take place in cognisance of the Child Safeguarding Statement and Child Safeguarding Procedures and will be in line with the Acceptable Use Policy.
- ❖ Parents/guardians confirm/decline their consent for the use of their child's image in a school setting and on the school website, at the time of enrolment. Should circumstances change, parents/guardians are asked to inform the principal in writing.

The following statement applies to the use of mobile phones in St. Brigid's GNS:

Pupils are not permitted to have mobile phones on or to use them in any way while on the school premises as defined by the school boundary wall, during the school day. This statement applies to the use of any other internet-enabled devices such as laptops, tablets, gaming devices and digital music players, this list is not exhaustive.

Distance Learning:

Guidelines for good online communication:

- ❖ Staff, families and students are expected to behave in an appropriate, safe, respectful and kind manner online.
- ❖ 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.
- ❖ Staff members can communicate with pupils and their families via Aladdin or through an established app (e.g. Seesaw, Google Classroom) and through assigned email addresses.
- ❖ Any electronic forms of communication will be for educational purposes and to allow for communication with families.

- ❖ Students and staff will communicate using tools which have been approved by the school and of which parents have been notified (Seesaw, Google Classroom, school email addresses)
- ❖ Parental permission will be acquired before setting up a profile for a pupil on a communication forum.
- ❖ For security reasons, passwords will be provided to families (parents), where applicable.
- ❖ St Brigid's GNS cannot accept responsibility for the security of online platforms, in the event that they are hacked.
- ❖ 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. Should a parent come into possession of a staff member's phone number this should not be used as a method of communication by parents.

Guidelines for staff members using online communication methods:

- ❖ Staff members will communicate with pupils and families during the hours of 8.50am – 2:30pm, where possible.
- ❖ Staff members will have high expectations regarding pupil behaviour, with any communication which takes place online.
- ❖ Staff members will seek to become familiar with apps before using them with pupils.
- ❖ Staff will check that consent has been given, before setting up a pupil profile for an online app.
- ❖ Staff members will report any concerns regarding online behaviour or interactions to school management.

Rules for pupils using online communication methods:

For submitting learning:

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

Guidelines for parents and guardians:

For learning

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

Staff:

- ❖ Staff will model good practice and ethical, responsible use of digital technologies and the internet with pupils.
- ❖ In keeping with the Teaching Council's Code of Professional Conduct, staff will ensure that any communication with pupils, colleagues, parents/guardians and others is appropriate, including communication via electronic media, such as e-mail, texting and social media [par.3.7].
- ❖ Staff should ensure that the privacy settings on their social media accounts are robust. Reasonable care should be exercised not to allow any social media communication with pupils using their personal social media accounts, personal e-mail accounts or personal mobile phones. Personal mobile numbers, email addresses or social media details should not be shared by teachers with pupils. Class emails were setup for use for the duration of the Covid-19 school closure in 19/20. Teachers should reply to parent email address only. Emails may be deleted at end of an academic year. Teachers should not 'Friend' pupils on social media platforms or accept a Friend request from a pupil on the teacher's personal social media account.
- ❖ Staff must ensure that they do not knowingly access, download or otherwise have in their possession while engaged in school activities, inappropriate materials/images in electronic or other format.

- ❖ Staff will familiarise themselves with relevant Department of Education and Skills circulars pertaining to the use of digital technologies.

Parents:

- ❖ As the primary educators of children, parents/guardians are encouraged to be positive role models in their use of social media platforms, in order to foster good example for their children. Parents/guardians are advised against using social media in ways that are not supportive of the school or its policies.
- ❖ Parents/guardians are respectfully reminded of their responsibilities to supervise their children's internet access and use at home, and to ensure that adequate parental/guardian controls are in place to reduce the risk of children accessing inappropriate material.
- ❖ Parents/guardians are advised to familiarise themselves with support materials for parents/guardians on www.webwise.ie and follow the guidance given therein.

Legislation:

The following legislation is relevant to Internet Safety. Teachers and parents/guardians should be reasonably familiar with the effect of the provisions that they contain. However, the list is not exhaustive.

- Data Protection Acts 1988 to 2018
- Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council (GDPR)
- Child Care Acts 1991 and 2001
- Criminal Justice Act 2006 amending the Child Care Acts
- Trafficking and Pornography Act 1998
- Non-Fatal Offences Against the Persons Act 1997
- Interception of Postal Packets and Telecommunications Messages (Regulation) Act 1993 as amended
- Video Recordings Act 1989 <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1989/act/22/enacted/en/html>

Legislation can be viewed on www.irishstatutebook.ie

Support Structures:

The school will inform pupils and parents/guardians of key support structures and organisations that deal with illegal material or harmful use of the internet. Several sites and national bodies offer helpful advice to parents/guardians, particularly with respect to how they can best monitor their child's use of the internet at home. Important and useful information can be found on the following sites:

www.webwise.ie, www.internetsafety.ie, www.education.ie, www.thinkb4uclick.ie, www.bully4u.ie

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.

The attendance by pupils in this school implies acceptance by them and their parents/guardians of this school's Acceptable Use Policy.

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on the 6th June 2024