RUSHALL NATIONAL SCHOOL

Pike of Rushall,

Mountrath,

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# Internet Acceptable Use Policy

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# 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 at least annually. Before signing, 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 Rushall NS.

- It also applies to members of staff, volunteers, parents, carers and others who access the internet in Rushall NS.

**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.**

Rushall NS will deal with incidents that take place outside the school that impact on the wellbeing of students or staff under this policy and associated codes of behaviour and anti-bullying policies. In such cases Rushall NS will, where known, inform parents/carers of incidents of inappropriate online behaviour that takes place out of school and impose the appropriate sanctions.

Rushall NS 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.
- Teachers will be provided with continuing professional development opportunities in the area of internet safety.
- Rushall NS participates in Safer Internet Day activities to promote safer more effective use of the internet.

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed annually by the following stakeholders:
**Board of Management, teaching staff, support staff, pupils, and parents**

This policy has been 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.
- Internal monitoring data for network activity.
- Surveys and/or questionnaires of pupils.

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

The implementation of this Internet Acceptable Use policy will be monitored by the Principal.

## Content Filtering

Rushall NS has chosen to implement the following level on content filtering on the Schools Broadband Network:

- **Level 6:** The "widest" level, allowing access to websites like YouTube, personal blogging, and social networking, while still blocking inappropriate material.

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.

## Internet Use

Students will not intentionally visit internet sites that contain obscene, illegal, hateful or otherwise objectionable materials. (This should be filtered by School Broadband Network)

Students will be encouraged to report accidental accessing of inappropriate materials in accordance with school procedures.

Students will use the Internet for educational purposes only.

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.

## Email and Messaging

Students should immediately 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.

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.

# 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 Rushall NS:

- Use of instant messaging services and apps including Snapchat, WhatsApp, Viber, etc. is not allowed in Rushall NS.
- Use of video streaming sites such as YouTube and Vimeo etc. is 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 Rushall NS 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 Rushall NS into disrepute.

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

## Personal Devices

Students using their own technology in school should follow the rules set out in this agreement, in the same way as if they were using school equipment.

The following statements apply to the use of internet-enabled devices such as tablets, gaming devices, smartwatches, in Rushall NS:

- Students are not allowed to bring personal internet-enabled devices or video / audio recording devices into Rushall NS, unless given specific permission by the class teacher/principal.

## Digital Learning Platforms (including video conferencing)

Rushall NS digital learning platform is managed by the school (**Google workspace).**

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.

## School Websites

The website will be regularly checked to ensure that there is no content that compromises the safety, privacy, or reputation of students or staff.

Rushall NS will use only digital photographs, audio or video clips of focusing on group activities. Content focusing on individual students will only be published on the school website with parental permission.

Personal student information including home address and contact details will not be published on Rushall NS web pages.

The Rushall NS will avoid publishing the first name and last name of pupils in video or photograph captions published online.

## Images and Video

At Rushall NS 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.

Written permission from parents or carers will be obtained 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.

## 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 person's sexuality, appearance etc.

Access to technology means that cyberbullying can happen around the clock and the student's 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 Bí Cineálta (Anti-Bullying) Procedures for Schools, Rushall NS**

**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 Rushall NS 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's Bí Cineálta (Anti-Bullying) Procedures, 2025 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 Bí Cineálta (anti-bullying) policy and Well Being policy of our school.

## 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:

- 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 should be referred to in the school's Code of Behaviour and Bí Cineálta (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 Siochanna.

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This policy will be reviewed as necessary. This policy was approved by the Board of Management of Rushall NS on _____.

Signed Danny Reddin _____ Date 18/6/2025

Mr Danny Reddin

(Chairperson, Board of Management)

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