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## Acceptable Usage Policy for Internet Use

The aim of this Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) is to ensure that pupils will benefit from learning opportunities offered by the school's Internet resources in a safe and effective manner. Internet use and access is considered a school resource and privilege. Therefore, if the school AUP is not adhered to this privilege will be withdrawn and appropriate sanctions – as outlined in the AUP – will be imposed.

It is envisaged that school and parent representatives will revise the AUP regularly. Before enrolling, the AUP should be read carefully to ensure that the conditions of use are accepted and understood. The policy is available at [www.portlawns.ie](http://www.portlawns.ie).

**It is assumed that parents and guardians accept the terms of the AUP unless the school is specifically notified.**

### School's Strategy

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:

#### General

- Internet sessions will always be supervised by a teacher.
- Filtering software from the Professional Development Service for Teachers PDST.ie website is used in order to minimise the risk of exposure to inappropriate material.
- The school will regularly monitor pupils' usage through classroom observation and centralised systems.
- Students and teachers will be provided with training in the area of Internet safety.
- 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 memory sticks and other digital storage media in school requires a teacher's permission.
- Students will treat others with respect at all times and will not undertake any actions that may bring the school into disrepute (e.g. Anti-Bullying Procedures).

#### Personal Devices

- **Students should not bring mobile phones or other personally-owned electronic devices to school.** *Electronic devices include but are not limited to: smart phones, gaming systems, laptops, tablets/iPads, digital cameras, digital music devices and smart watches.*
- In very exceptional circumstances if a pupil must bring their phone to school, it should

be handed in to the office first thing in the morning and may be collected at the end of the school day. Permission for this facility is at the discretion of the principal and may be withdrawn , particularly in the event of it becoming a regular occurrence.

- Where a pupil breaks this rule, the class teacher may confiscate the pupil's device. The device will be placed in the office and returned to the child's parent/guardian when they come in to sign for it.
- The Board of Management of Portlaw NS does not accept any responsibility for loss, damage or theft of pupil's personal devices while they are on school property.
- Staff are expected to limit personal use of their mobile phone use to break times.
- Appropriate online behaviour and adherence to the Acceptable Use policy should always be used.

## **Internet Use**

- Students will not intentionally visit Internet sites that contain obscene, illegal, hateful or otherwise objectionable materials.
- Students will report accidental accessing of inappropriate materials in accordance with school procedures.
- Students will use the Internet for educational purposes only during class time.
- Students will not copy information into assignments and fail to acknowledge the source (plagiarism and copyright infringement).
- Students will never disclose or publicise personal information.
- Downloading by the children of materials or images not relevant to their studies, is in direct breach of this acceptable use policy.
- Students 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.

## **Email**

- The use of personal email accounts is not permitted at Portlaw NS, except in exceptional circumstances.
- Students will not send or receive any material that is illegal, obscene, defamatory or that is intended to annoy or intimidate another person.
- Students will not use personal emails.
- If required, approved email addresses will be provided by the school.  
Students will use these emails for school related activities and for registering on school based activities only.  
Students should avoid opening emails that appear suspicious and should report any such email to a teacher.
- Pupils and staff should report the receipt of any communication that makes them feel uncomfortable, is offensive, discriminatory, threatening or bullying in nature and should not respond to any such communication.

## Social Media and messaging services for Staff and Students

- 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.
- The use of instant messaging services and apps including but not limited to, Snapchat, WhatsApp, Instagram, Tik, Tok etc is not allowed by students in Portlaw NS.
- The use of video streaming sites such as YouTube and Vimeo etc is only allowed with the permission and supervision from teaching staff.
- Staff and students must not discuss personal information about students, staff and other members of the school 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 the school into disrepute.
- Staff and students must not represent their personal views as those of the school on any social media service or message services.

### Please note:

- **All social media sites have minimum age requirements.** (Eg. Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok etc) We would advise parents to follow national guidelines and not allow their children to have personal accounts before they reach the appropriate age.
- **Parents and guardians are encouraged to regularly check their child's online activity / digital footprint and to be aware of their child's online interactions with others and provide guidance and supervision of same.**
- *Please note section below regarding cyberbullying.*

### Parents/Guardians;

- Please do not 'tag' photographs or any other content which would identify children or staff in the school.
- **If you are uploading a photograph of your own child to your social media, please ensure it does not contain other children from Portlaw NS.** While photographs at school events are generally permitted we request that they **not** be shared on any social media.
- Please ensure that any online messages or comments to the school are respectful at all times. Any messages written on social media are treated in the same way as written messages to the school.
- Avoid negative conversations about pupils, staff or parents on social media accounts.
- Please do not request to 'friend' a member of staff in the school. The staff would like to keep their personal lives personal. It may be awkward for a staff member to ignore a Facebook or other social network request.

## **Audio, images and video**

- Care should be taken when capturing audio, photographic or video images that learners are appropriately dressed and are not participating in activities that might bring the individuals or the school into disrepute.
- Students must not record audio, take, use, share, publish or distribute images of others without their permission.
- Recording audio, 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/guardians is obtained on enrolment to Portlaw NS before video, audio or photographs of students are published on the school website.
- Students must not share audio, 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/video and in particular explicit images/video of students and/or minors is an unacceptable and absolutely prohibited behaviour, with serious consequences and sanctions for those involved. Sharing explicit images/video of other students automatically incurs suspension as a sanction.
- Staff, parents, volunteers, contractors and external agencies are not permitted to use audio recordings, photographs, videos or other digital images of pupils for personal, promotional or commercial purposes. This includes, but is not limited to, use on personal websites, blogs, social media platforms, video sharing services, or any form of personal business or professional promotion (for example, 'influencer' content).
- Any recording or use of pupil images or audio must be for approved educational purposes only, must follow the school's safeguarding and data protection policies, and must have appropriate consent in place.

## **Inappropriate Activities**

Users should not visit internet sites, make, post, download, upload, data transfer, communicate or pass on, material, remarks, proposals or comments that contain or relate to:

- Promotion or conduct of illegal acts, e.g. under the child protection, obscenity, computer misuse and fraud legislation
- Racist material or promotion of racial or religious hatred
- Pornography or child sexual abuse material
- Promotion of any kind of discrimination

- Any other information which may be offensive to students or staff or breaches the integrity of the ethos of the school or brings the school into disrepute
- Use systems, applications, websites or other mechanisms that bypass the filtering or other safeguards employed by the school
- 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
- Online gaming or gambling
- Any other activity considered questionable

## **School Website**

Please note that the following points apply to the school's web site and social media profiles.

- Pupils 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 or Instagram page.
- The website will be regularly checked to ensure that there is no content that compromises the safety of pupils or staff.
- The publication of student work will be coordinated by a teacher.
- Pupils' work may appear in an educational context on other Web pages, for example, winners of a competition, participation in an educational programme.
- The school will endeavour to use digital photographs, audio or video clips focusing on group activities. Photographs, audio and video clips may be used.
- The school may publish media of school or class activities onto the school's social media account and/or website.
- Personal pupil information including home address and contact details will be omitted from school web pages.
- The school website will avoid publishing the full name of individuals in a photograph.
- The school will ensure that the image files are appropriately named –pupils' names will not be used in image file names or ALT tags if published online.
- Pupils will continue to own the copyright on any work published.
- If a parent would like any published media material removed, they should contact the class teacher.



## Cyberbullying

When using the internet pupils, parents and staff are expected to treat others with respect at all times.

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 also includes cyberbullying even when it occurs outside the school or at night.

Cyberbullying is the use of technology to bully a person with the intent to hurt, humiliate or intimidate them. Cyberbullying can take many forms including exclusion online, hurtful messages/images, abusive messages/emails, imitating someone online, etc. This type of bullying is increasingly common and is continuously evolving. It can occur at any time and in any place and does not require face to face contact.

*Department of Education Anti-Bullying Procedure, 2013 defines cyberbullying as 'placing 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.*

Engaging in online activities with the intent 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, in line with Portlaoise N.S. Code of Behaviour.

**We encourage all parents and guardians to be fully aware of the capabilities of any device or digital platform they allow their children use.**

**We ask parents and guardians to supervise their children's use of all devices and digital platforms and to be aware of their online activity.**

**Webwise** (the Department and EU Funded Internet Safety Initiative) provides information, advice, and tools to parents to support their engagement in their children's online lives via: [www.webwise.ie](http://www.webwise.ie)

## AI (Artificial Intelligence)

### Educational Integration and Support

- The school recognises the potential benefits of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in education and is committed to its responsible and ethical use within our learning environment.
- AI technologies are integrated into the curriculum to enhance learner outcomes and

experiences.

- The school will make the necessary adjustments to our school's adoption and integration of AI based on review and feedback.

### **Ethical Use and Data Protection**

- Entering personal, sensitive, or confidential data into any AI system without proper authorisation is strictly prohibited.
- Learners will not create, share or send any AI generated material that is illegal, obscene and defamatory or that is intended to annoy or intimidate another person.
- Staff and learners must not use AI in any way to harass, insult, abuse or defame learners, their family members, staff, other members of the school community.
- Staff and learners must not engage in activities involving AI generated material which might bring the school into disrepute.

### **Learner Use of AI**

- AI Generated material is not allowed for assignments or homework.

### **Direct Communication using Internet**

In the event of the school having to close unexpectedly for an extended period of time, teachers will endeavour to support pupils and parents to ensure schooling/learning can continue.

Teachers in the school may choose to use a number of tools for classroom communication. Examples include Google Classroom, Webex, Zoom, SeeSaw, and ClassDojo. Some of these tools provide synchronous video opportunities whereby a staff member directly speaks to the children live - e.g. through a webinar or online meeting. The staff member invites pupils and their families to these meetings using a code. The following are ground rules for synchronous lessons online.

- All meetings will be password protected.
- All people involved in the meeting will conduct themselves in the same manner as would be expected in a regular class.
- The staff member has the right to eject any person from a synchronous lesson should they behave inappropriately.
- Screenshots or recordings of any part of the lesson / meeting on any device is not permitted.
- An adult family member is expected to be close by when a pupil is engaging in a meeting. They should monitor all online interactions from the pupil.
- Normal school rules apply.



- Staff will not meet any child alone using an online meeting. If there is a need for a meeting between a child and a staff member, another adult must be present at the meeting.
- While chat may be available in an online meeting, it is the responsibility of the child's family to ensure that any interaction is appropriate. Any interaction from a pupil that could be deemed as inappropriate may result in the child's removal from the lesson or, where appropriate, a referral to Child Protection Services.

## Legislation

Teachers, students and parents should familiarise themselves with the following legislation relating to use of the Internet:

- Data Protection Acts 1988 to 2018 and General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)
- Copyright and Related Rights Acts 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
- Online Safety Framework

## Support Structure

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 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, including An Garda Síochána.

Signed: Mary Dunne

Date: 2/3/2026

Chairperson, Board of Management, Portlaw NS.