



Scoil Náisiúnta **Tobar Mhairéide**

# St. Margaret's National School

## Acceptable Use Policy

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## **General Approach:**

The aim of this Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) is to ensure that pupils will benefit from the learning opportunities offered by the school's internet resources in a safe and effective manner.

Internet use and access to the internet is considered a school resource and privilege. If the school AUP is not adhered to this privilege may be withdrawn and appropriate sanctions – as outlined in the AUP will be imposed.

When using the internet, pupils, 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.

This Acceptable Use Policy applies to pupils who have access to and are users of the internet in St. Margaret's N.S. It also applies to members of staff, volunteers, parents, carers and others who access the internet in St. Margaret's N.S.

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.

St. Margaret's N.S. may deal with incidents that take place outside the school that impact on the wellbeing of pupils or staff under this policy and associated codes of behaviour and anti-bullying policies.

In such cases St. Margaret's N.S. will, where known, inform parents/guardians of incidents of inappropriate online behaviour that take place out of school and may contact Gardaí and/or Túsla if we feel it necessary.

## **St. Margaret's N.S. implements the following strategies on promoting safer use of the Internet:**

- Internet sessions are always supervised.
- Virus Protection Software will be used and updated regularly.
- Pupils must not bring personal external drives or any type of data storage devices to school.
- Pupils will be provided with education in the area of internet safety as part of our implementation of the SPHE curriculum.
- Internet safety advice and support opportunities are provided to pupils in St. Margaret's N.S. through our ICT, SPHE, Anti-Bullying programmes.
- Teachers and staff will be provided with continuing professional development opportunities in the area of internet safety.
- St. Margaret's N.S. will participate in "Safer Internet Day activities" on Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> February 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, Assistant Principal and teachers.

**The school will monitor the impact of the policy using:**

- Logs of reported incidents.
- Monitoring logs of internet activity (including sites visited)
- Surveys and/or questionnaires of pupils, parents and staff.

Should serious online safety incidents take place, the school principal or deputy principal will be informed.

The implementation of this Internet Acceptable Use policy will be monitored by the class teachers, Deputy Principal and Principal.

### **Content Filtering:**

The Schools Broadband Programme provides an integrated set of services to schools which includes broadband connectivity, and hosted services including content filtering, and security services including anti-virus control and a centralised firewall. These services are managed by the Schools Broadband Team which includes PDST Technology in Education working closely with the Department of Education and Skills and HEAnet. St. Margaret's N.S. has chosen to implement level 4 on content filtering on the Schools Broadband Network.

This level allows access to millions of websites including games and YouTube but blocks access to websites belonging to the personal websites category and websites such as Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram and others belonging to the Social Networking category.

Pupils 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.

## **Personal Devices:**

Pupils should not bring mobile phones to school unless absolutely necessary. Those who bring mobile phones to school must keep them switched off at all times and stored in their schoolbags. If engaged in an off-site activity such as a school tour the phone must be switched off and out of sight at all times. A pupil may only handle a mobile phone during the school day with the prior approval of the class teacher or Principal.

Pupils who ignore this policy will be required to hand over their phone to a member of staff. The phone will be confiscated for a minimum of twenty-four hours, after which parents will be requested to collect it from the school office.

**The digital age of consent in Ireland is 16. This is the age below which a person cannot by law make an agreement with an online service provider. These agreements allow social media companies such as Facebook, Instagram or WhatsApp to access users' personal information without the need for parental permission.**

## **Web Browsing and Downloading:**

- Pupils will not intentionally visit internet sites that contain obscene, illegal, hateful or otherwise objectionable materials.
- Pupils will report accidental accessing of inappropriate materials to their teacher.
- Pupils and staff will not copy information from the internet without acknowledging the creator and referencing the source of the content.
- Pupils and staff 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.
- Pupils will use the school's internet connection only for educational activities.
- Pupils will not engage in online activities such as uploading or downloading large files that result in heavy network traffic which impairs the service for other internet users..
- Downloading by pupils of materials or images not relevant to their studies is not allowed.

## **Email and Messaging:**

- The use of personal email accounts is not allowed at St. Margaret's N.S.
- Pupils will not send any material that is illegal, obscene or defamatory. Nor shall they send material that is intended to annoy or intimidate another person.
- Pupils will not use school email accounts or personal emails.
- Pupils and staff 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.
- Staff should avoid opening emails that appear suspicious.

## **Social Media:**

The following statements apply to the use of messaging, blogging and video streaming services in St. Margaret's N.S.:

- Use of instant messaging services and apps including Snapchat, WhatsApp, Instagram, Tik Tok etc. is not allowed by students in St. Margaret's N.S.
- In school, the use of video streaming sites such as YouTube and Vimeo etc. is allowed with express permission from teaching staff.

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 or other members of the St. Margaret's N.S. community.

Staff and pupils must not discuss personal information about pupils, parents, staff and other members of the St. Margaret's N.S. community on social media.

Staff and pupils must not use school email addresses for setting up personal social media accounts or to communicate through such media.

Staff and pupils must not engage in activities involving social media which might bring St. Margaret's N.S. into disrepute.

Staff and pupils must not represent their personal views as those of being St. Margaret's N.S. on any social medium.

## **Images & Video:**

- At St. Margaret's N.S. pupils 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 are only allowed with express permission from staff.
- Written consent from parents or carers will be obtained before photographs of pupils are published on the school website.
- Pupils 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 pupils and/or minors is an illegal and unacceptable behaviour, with serious consequences and sanctions for those involved. Sharing explicit images of other pupils automatically incurs suspension as a sanction.

## **Cyberbullying:**

Cyber-bullying can occur at any time and in any place but most often outside school. It is reported that in many cases parents struggle to promote appropriate online behaviour, check their children's IT usage, or ensure their children stay safe while on-line. In conjunction with our Parents' Association, we encourage parents to be fully aware of the capabilities of any device or digital platform they allow their children use.

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

Measures are taken to ensure that staff and pupils understand bullying as defined by the Department of Education and Skills. This is unwanted negative behaviour, verbal, psychological or physical, conducted by an individual or group against another person (or persons) and which is repeated over time. 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 is also regarded as bullying behaviour.

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.

As stated in our Anti-Bullying Policy, serious instances of bullying behaviour will, in accordance with the *Children First and the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*, be referred to the TUSLA Children and Family Agency and/or Gardaí as appropriate.

## **School Website:**

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

Webpages allowing comments or user-generated content will be pre-moderated and checked frequently to ensure that they do not contain any inappropriate or offensive content.

The publication of student work will be coordinated by a teacher.

St. Margaret's N.S. will use only digital photographs, audio or video clips 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 St. Margaret's N.S. web pages.

St. Margaret's N.S. will not publish the first name and last name of pupils in video or photograph captions published online.

Pupils will continue to own the copyright on any work published.

## **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. This information will be available at Internet Safety talks during the school year.

## **Distance Learning**

This is a working document. As we try out new ways of supporting distance learning, the document will be updated.

Teachers may use one or more of the following communication platforms to engage with parents and pupils during a school closure: phone, email, Aladdin Connect, Google Meet and Zoom. While using these platforms, mutual respect and kindness should be demonstrated at all times. The rules as described previously in this policy and in our behaviour policy will apply equally during this unscheduled school closure.

### **Phone:**

- Teachers may contact parents/guardians by phone to offer support or request information.
- If teachers need to use their personal phone to contact parents/guardians, they will adjust their phone settings to hide their Caller ID.

### **Email:**

- Teachers will use their school email accounts while they are engaged in school work.
- Teachers will ensure that parent/guardian email addresses will remain private. Emails will be sent on an individual basis or sent to groups using the Bcc facility.
- Parents/guardians will be contacted using email addresses from the pupil enrolment form. Additional email addresses can be added on request.
- Parents will not share teacher's email addresses with third parties without consent.

### **Google Classroom:**

- Teachers will use Google Classroom to share learning activities, demonstrations and assignments with pupils and their parents/guardians.
- Teachers will use Google Classroom to send individual and group messages to pupils and parents/guardians.
- Pupils and Parents/guardians will use Google Classroom to submit their children's completed assignments and to send messages to the teacher.
- Content from pupils will not be posted on Google Classroom stream without permission from parent/guardian.
- Teachers will check and approve all content before posting it on Google Classroom.
- Teachers will ensure that each Google Classroom is password protected.
- Photos, including photos of teachers or pupils, screenshots or recordings of any kind should not be taken of content posted by teachers, parents or pupils through Google Classroom.



### **Google Meet/Zoom:**

- Some teachers may use either Google Meet or Zoom to communicate with their pupils.
- Where Google Meet or Zoom is used, the following etiquette should be followed.

### **Google Meet or Zoom Call Etiquette**

#### **Rules:**

- Teachers or SNAs will always co-host Google Meet or Zoom calls with another teacher or SNA.
- Teachers or SNAs will ensure all pupils are muted until given permission to speak.
- When setting up a Google Meet or Zoom call the Waiting Room facility will be enabled to ensure only invited participants may take part.
- Hosts will be careful when screen-sharing not to display personal data.
- The chat function will be disabled during Zoom calls.
- Zoom calls must be within sight of a parent/guardian
- Screenshots or recordings of any part of the Google Meet or Zoom call on any device, including a secondary device, are not allowed.
- Inappropriate language will not be tolerated.
- Appropriate clothing must be worn by everyone that can be seen on camera.
- Normal school rules apply. Be kind and respectful to all participants with our words and our actions. This applies both on screen and in the chat facility.
- If any of the above rules are broken, the pupil will be removed from the Zoom call immediately and an email will be sent to the parent/guardian of the child outlining the reason for the child's removal.
- The meeting ID/ login link is personal, and should not be shared with others.

#### **While on Google Meet or Zoom:**

- Choose somewhere that is suitable for the meeting. Try and find a quiet spot in your house that is within sight of an adult.
- Mute your microphone when you are not speaking. This will help keep background noise to a minimum so we can hear each other speak.
- Respect what everyone is saying by listening carefully and not interrupting.
- Everyone should dress appropriately and remember it's not a time for food or drinks.

**Implementation of the Policy**

The policy will be available from the principal to the B.O.M., Teachers and other staff members. Parents and guardians can avail of a copy of the policy on enrolment of their child in the school, or on request.

The policy will be regularly evaluated and updated when necessary.

**Timeframe:** It will then be reviewed annually.

**Ratification & Communication:**

- This Acceptable Use Policy has been prepared on the conditions that exist in the school at the time of writing. It may be altered, revised or updated at a future date to comply with any changes in conditions

**This policy was ratified by the Board of Management in May 2020.**