



## Mercy Secondary School

### Acceptable Use and Mobile Phone Use Policy

#### **Introduction and Rationale:**

This document outlines the school's policy on permitted usage of the Internet and our policy on Mobile Phone use. The policy applies to all Internet users of Mercy Secondary School and all methods of Internet access, including desktop computers, laptop computers, mobile telephony, tablets, personal digital assistants (PDA's) and other devices capable of accessing the Internet.

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 Therefore, if the school AUP is not adhered to this privilege may be withdrawn and further sanctions may apply.

It is hoped that the Board and staff will revise the AUP annually. Before signing, the AUP should be read carefully to ensure that the conditions of use are accepted and understood.

This version of the AUP was created in August 2022. It was posted in draft format on the school website for consultation with the parents.

#### **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:**

1. Internet sessions will always be supervised by a teacher.
2. PDST Filtering will apply to the schools incoming Internet signal.
3. Students and teachers will be provided with training in the area of internet safety (see support structures)
4. Uploading and downloading of non-approved software will not be permitted.
5. Virus protection software will be used and updated on a regular basis.
6. The use of personal memory sticks, CD-ROMs, or other digital storage media in school requires a teacher's permission.
7. Students will observe good 'netiquette' (i.e., ettiquette on the Internet) at all times, treat others with respect and will not undertake any actions that may bring the school into disrepute.



### World Wide Web:

- Teachers will select sites which will support pupils' learning. Students will not intentionally visit internet sites that contain obscene, illegal, hateful or otherwise objectionable materials.
- Students must tell a teacher immediately if they encounter any material that is inappropriate or material that makes them feel uncomfortable.
- Students will use the internet for educational purposes only.
- 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 materials or images not relevant to their studies, is in direct breach of the school's 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:

- Students will use approved class email accounts under supervision by or permission from a teacher.
- 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 reveal their own or other people's personal details, such as addresses or telephone numbers or pictures.
- Students will never arrange a face-to-face meeting with someone they only know through emails or the internet.
- Students will note that sending and receiving email attachments is subject to permission from their teacher.
- Students will not use their school devices to video, photograph or otherwise document another student, teacher or other staff member.

### School Website:

- Pupils will be given the opportunity to publish projects, artwork or school work on the world wide web in accordance with clear policies and approval processes regarding the content that can be loaded to the school's website
- 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 co-ordinated by a teacher.
- Pupils' 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. Parental permission is gained to publish content focusing on students.
- Personal pupil information including home address and contact details will be omitted from school web pages.
- The school website will avoid, where possible publishing the first name and last name 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.



**Communication Technologies:**

<b><u>Communication Technologies</u></b>	Allowed	Allowed at certain times	Allowed with staff permission	Not allowed
Junior Students use of mobile phones in school				✓
Senior Students Use of Mobile Phone		✓		
Use of mobile phones in lessons				✓
Use of mobile phones in social time for Seniors		✓		
Taking photos on mobile phones or other camera devices				✓
Use of hand held devices eg PDAs, PSPs				✓
Use of personal email addresses in school, or on school network				✓
Use of chat rooms / facilities				✓
Use of instant messaging				✓
Use of social networking sites				✓
Use of blogs			✓	



### Whole Class Internet Sessions/Browsing:

- The use of blogs, social networking sites, instant messaging and/or chat rooms may be used on a whole class basis at the teachers discretion.
- At times, teachers may wish to use images to inform teaching. If carrying out an image search using a search engine e.g. Google™ images, teachers will ensure that their whiteboards are set to 'no show'. This will ensure that the students are not exposed to any inappropriate results. The teacher may then deselect the 'no show' button, when he/she has found an appropriate image to inform his/her teaching.
- YouTube™ is a video sharing forum and, at teacher discretion, is permitted for educational/recreational use in whole class settings. When teachers are conducting a video search using YouTube™, teachers must ensure that their whiteboards are set to 'no show' and that the audio is switched off/muted. This will ensure that the students are not exposed to any inappropriate results/advertisements. The teacher may then deselect the 'no show' button and switch on/unmute the audio, when he/she has found an appropriate video to inform his/her teaching or for recreational purposes. Teachers will have previewed any video segment in advance of showing it to the whole class.

### Legislation:

The school will provide information on the following legislation relating to use of the internet which teachers and parents should familiarise themselves with:

- Data Protection (Amendment) Act 2003  
<http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/2003/en/act/pub/0006/index.html>
- Child Trafficking and Pornography Act 1998  
<http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/1998/en/act/pub/0022/index.html>
- Interception Act 1993  
<http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/1993/en/act/pub/0010/print.html>
- Video Recordings Act 1989  
<http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/1989/en/act/pub/0022/index.html>
- The Data Protection Act 1988  
<http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/1988/en/act/pub/0025/index.html>



### Support Structures:

Teachers will give instruction on appropriate use of the Internet and how to use it safely. . The following is a selection of websites offering support for Internet safety.

- NCTE - <http://www.ncte.ie/InternetSafety>
- Webwise - <http://www.webwise.ie>
- Make IT Secure - <http://makeitsecure.ie>
- Safe Internet - <http://www.saferinternet.org/>
- Think Before You Click [www.thinkb4uclick.ie](http://www.thinkb4uclick.ie)
- Safety, Facts, Awareness and Tools - <http://www.saftonline.org>

### Mobile Phone Policy

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.

*This policy as part of our code of behaviour is underpinned by our obligations under the Irish Constitution and current legislation, including the Education Welfare Act, 2000 and NEWB Guidelines, 2008.*

- *Our Mission Statement and School Ethos*
- *The CEIST Charter*
- *Fair procedures and the principals of natural justice.*

*'Each school has its unique identity, ethos, values and culture. The Board has particular responsibility for the ethos of the school, as well as having overall responsibility for school policies' (Page 15, NEWB Guidelines, 2008)*

Mercy Secondary School, Inchicore recognises that mobile phones and digital devices are now an integral part of young peoples' culture and way of life and can have considerable value, particularly in relation to individual safety and education.



It is recognised that such technology will play an increasing part in future learning practices, but, like existing ICT use, this should follow agreed rules and guidelines to prevent disruption and instill good learning habits. This mobile phone policy emphasises the wellbeing of the student, socialisation with peers and face-to-face contact with friends. This is a very important part of school life in Mercy Secondary Inchicore. The school aims to educate pupils in the responsible use of technology.

The school accepts that pupils are permitted to bring mobile phones to school but that their use is subject to the following guidelines. Responsibility for the phone rests with the student and the school accepts no financial responsibility for damage, loss or theft.

Note: The term 'phone' in this policy denotes mobile phones, iPods, iPads, iwatches and any similar portable electronic devices.

### **Guidelines for Mobile phone usage for Mercy Secondary School, Inchicore.**

1. Students are required to use phones and devices responsibly when permitted.
2. Students must ensure that files stored on their phones do not contain violent, degrading or offensive images.
3. The transmission of some images/information can be a criminal offence and will be dealt with as such by the school.
4. Cyber-bullying is completely unacceptable, and will be followed up by the school as serious misbehaviour which the school, in turn, will invoke the necessary sanctions as laid out in the school's code of behaviour and Antibullying policy.
5. Mercy Secondary school, Inchicore aims to provide effective teaching and learning in a safe and caring atmosphere. Phones can disrupt effective teaching and learning, even when in silent mode, and irresponsible use can lead to child protection and data protection being compromised.
6. Good habits in digital usage are outlined in the notes of information attached to this policy.

### **Rules and expectations**

#### **Students 1st-5th year**



Students in 1st - 5th year must not use phones at all during the course of the school day. This is inclusive of breaks, lunches and school outings.

This means that phones **must not** be used for:

- making calls
- Texting
- Partaking in any social media
- checking the time,
- texting or used as a calculator

### **Senior students in 6th year**

6th year students are permitted to use/access their mobile phones only in their **base classroom** during break and lunch. **They must not be used on corridors or in social areas.**

Mobile phones/headphones/Airpods etc must not be visible at all during class time. Equipment must be switched off and stored in the students' bag. Pupils must not use phones or MP3 players to broadcast music, or transfer inappropriate material. No device should be used in the school to photograph or video students or staff without the authority of the Principal. No student is allowed to use a phone (or any photographic device) to take a photograph/video in the school or at any school event **without the express permission of a Tutor, Yearhead or Principal.**

The use of a mobile phone to take photographs will hence be in very limited circumstances, if any. Students are not permitted to upload to the internet or transfer by text or social media images of other members of the school community without their permission or in the case of a student – without the permission of the parents of that student.

### **Necessary contact from home**

If there is an emergency which requires communication with home, pupils must speak to a member of staff who will deal with the matter. Students are not permitted to contact their parents/guardians on their mobiles. All communications **to and from** parents happen via the office. In an emergency, parents/guardians should phone the school office and a message will be taken immediately to the





student. This ensures that a student is given support and privacy in dealing with a potentially difficult situation.

Students who feel unwell may report to their Tutor who will contact home. Students are not permitted to use their mobile phones to make calls or texts. This allows support and supervision for the student when unwell. Mobile phones cannot, under any circumstances, be taken into examination rooms. Breach of this rule will lead to invalidation of that examination and potentially other examinations.

### **CONSEQUENCES of not following the mobile use policy**

In the event of a student failing to comply with the above school policy the following sanctions will apply:

#### **Confiscation of a mobile phone**

If a student is in breach of the school's mobile phone usage policy and a member of staff must confiscate the phone, the following procedures will apply:

- The teacher will ask the student to turn off the phone
- The student will hand over the phone (in its entirety i.e. SIM included) to the teacher
- The teacher will contact parents/guardians to notify them that the phone has been confiscated and to advise them of arrangements for a parent or guardian only to collect the phone at the end of the school day.
- The teacher will hand in the phone to the General Office where the phone will be placed in an envelope and placed in the Safe.
- The event will be recorded by the reporting teacher and brought to the attention of the appropriate Year Head.

**Refusal to co-operate with the mobile phone policy is a serious offence and will be dealt with as a serious misbehaviour within the code of behaviour.**

**Therefore,** If a student persists in breaching the rules as laid out in this policy, then the parents/guardians and student will be requested to attend a meeting with the Principal to discuss the issue. Furthermore, if no resolution to the breach of



policy can be found, the Parent/Guardian may be requested to attend a Board of Management Meeting. All meetings held between the Parent/Student and School Authority will be recorded and held on file securely within the school.

### **ADVICE TO PUPILS ON THE SAFE USE OF MOBILES**

Using your mobile is convenient and practical but you need to observe some common sense ground rules to protect yourself from potential abuse or danger.

Don't give out your number or friends' numbers to people you don't know, especially in Instant Messenger or Chat rooms.

Keep your security code or PIN number private.

If you get texts, which upset you, don't reply but keep a record and tell an adult. In serious cases you can report it to the police.

If you receive a rude or embarrassing image or text about someone don't forward it to others. Distributing sexual images of other young people is harassment and is illegal. If you receive something like this, tell an adult immediately.

Ask permission before taking a picture of your friends and think before sending it on. Once sent you have lost control of it and it could become public before you know it.

### **BENEFITS**

Students can use phones in cases of emergency outside school hours.

Students may feel more confident knowing they can make contact with someone if in difficulties.

Some digital technology can be useful for learning and homework.

### **Potential challenges and disadvantages**

Mobile phones are valuable and can be lost or stolen.

Students can be bullied by text messaging or silent phone calls.



Mobile phones can be used to store and communicate inappropriate material.

Unsuitable people are known to use mobile phones and text messages to make inappropriate contact with young people.

Mobile phones can violate GDPR standards and protection within the school community of the individual.

### Sanctions:

Misuse of the internet and Mobile Phones 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.





