

The Internet

The Internet is an electronic information highway connecting many thousands of computers all over the world and millions of individual subscribers. This global "network of networks" is not governed by any entity. This means that there are no limits or checks on the kind of information that is maintained by, and accessible to, Internet users. The educational value of appropriate information on the Internet is substantial. However, as the Internet is composed of information from a vast array of sources world-wide, it includes some material that is not of educational value in the context of the school. This material includes information which may be inaccurate, abusive, profane, sexually oriented, racist or illegal. In order to guard young people from any inherent dangers, it is the joint responsibility of school staff and the parent or guardian of each student to educate the student about his/her responsibility when using the Internet.

1. Staff and Students

- a) When using the Internet, all users must comply with all copyright, libel, fraud, discrimination and obscenity laws, and all school staff (both teachers and support staff) are expected to communicate in a professional manner consistent with the rules of behaviour governing employees in the education sector.
- b) Students are responsible for their good behaviour on the school network, just as they are on and off school premises. While the use of information and communication technologies is a required aspect of the Northern Ireland Curriculum, access to the Internet remains a privilege and not a right. It is given to students who act in a considerate and responsible manner, and may be withdrawn if they fail to maintain acceptable standards of use.
- c) Staff should ensure that students know and understand that no Internet user is permitted to:
 - retrieve, send, copy or display offensive messages or pictures;
 - use obscene or racist language;
 - harass, insult or attack others;
 - damage computers, computer systems or computer networks;
 - violate copyright laws;
 - use another user's password;
 - trespass in another user's folders, work or files;

- intentionally waste resources (such as on-line time and consumables);
 - use the network for unapproved purposes.
- d) Use of the Internet by school staff and students must be in support of the aims and objectives of the school curriculum.

2. **Location and Supervision**

- a) The c2k system is a filtered service and so all users should be aware that the school can and does track and record the sites visited, the searches made on the Internet and e-mail sent and received by individual users.
- b) Students should be allowed to use the Internet only when supervised by a member of staff i.e. a teacher or an IT technician. Students should never be left alone in a classroom to use the Internet unsupervised (apart from exceptional circumstances). In all cases, students should be reminded of their responsibility to use these resources in line with the school policy on acceptable use. Teachers with access to SIMS.net must ensure that students can never gain access to the modules contained therein.
- c) The school should ensure that all students understand the rules governing acceptable use of the Internet and why these rules exist. A copy of the rules will be displayed in each IT room.
- d) The Network Manager will review files and communications to maintain system integrity and ensure that users are using the system responsibly. While normal privacy is respected and protected by password controls, as with the Internet itself, users must not expect files stored on the c2k network to be absolutely private.
- e) Electronic information-handling skills are now fundamental to the preparation of citizens and future employees in the Information Age. Staff should be encouraged to investigate the possibilities provided by access to this electronic information and communication resource, and blend its use, as appropriate, within the curriculum. They should model appropriate and effective use, and provide guidance and instruction to students in the acceptable use of the Internet.
- f) All staff are encouraged to make use of c2k e-mail for internal as well as external communication. This service can now be accessed from home, as well as school, through Learning NI.
- g) Access to other e-mail accounts eg. those based with yahoo, is no longer available from the school network.

3. **Examples of Acceptable and Unacceptable Use**

- a) **On-line activities which are encouraged include:**
- the use of the Internet to investigate and research school subjects, cross-curricular

themes and topics related to social and personal development;

- the use of the Internet to investigate careers and Further and Higher education;
- the use of email and computer conferencing for communication between colleagues, between student(s) and teacher(s), between student(s) and student(s), between schools and industry;
- the development of students' competence in ICT skills and their general research skills.

b) **On-line activities which are not permitted include:**

- searching, viewing and/or retrieving materials that are not related to the aims of the curriculum or future careers;
- sending or reading email that is not related to the aims of the curriculum or future careers;
- copying, saving and/or redistributing copyright protected material, without approval;
- subscribing to any services or ordering any goods or services, unless specifically approved by the school;
- playing computer games or using other interactive 'chat' sites, unless specifically assigned by the teacher;
- using the network in such a way that use of the network by other users is disrupted (for example: downloading large files during peak usage times);
- publishing, sharing or distributing any personal information about a user (such as: home address; email address; phone number, etc.);
- any activity that violates a school rule.

4. Advice for Parents

- a) While in school, teachers will guide students towards appropriate materials on the Internet. Outside school, parents or guardians bear the same responsibility for such guidance as they would normally exercise with information sources such as television, telephones, movies, radio and other media.
- b) Appropriate home use of the Internet by children can be educationally beneficial, and can make a useful contribution to home and school work. It should, however, be supervised, and parents should be aware that they are responsible for their children's use of Internet resources at home.
- c) Parents should discuss with their children the rules for using the Internet and decide together what comprises appropriate use;
- d) Parents should get to know the sites their children visit, and talk to them about what they are learning;
- e) Parents should ensure that they give their agreement before their children give out personal identifying information in any electronic communication on the Internet, such as a picture, an address, a phone number, the school name, or financial information such as credit card or bank details. In this way they can protect their children (and themselves) from unwanted or unacceptable overtures from strangers, from unplanned expenditure and from fraud;
- f) Parents should encourage their children not to respond to any unwelcome, unpleasant or abusive messages, and to tell them if they receive any such messages or images. If the message comes from an Internet service connection provided by the school they should immediately inform the school.

Misuse or abuse of the school's Internet facilities, in any way whatsoever, is a grave violation of the Internet policy of St Patrick's Academy, by which every pupil in the school is bound. Therefore, any such misuse or abuse will be regarded as a grave disciplinary matter, which may result in suspension or exclusion from the school. In addition, any inappropriate references, including the use of images, made to the school, its pupils or staff on the Internet outside school will be regarded as a breach of the school's Internet policy and will be dealt with in a similar way. Information of any such violation may be passed on to the appropriate outside authorities.