

Westfield Middle School Acceptable Use Policy

1 Who will write the policy?

The Acceptable Use Policy has been written by the Head of ICT and a school governor and will be reviewed on a yearly basis. It has been agreed by senior management and approved by governors.

Created: 04/3/11 by Mrs Vivien Criddle and Mrs Jenny King

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2 Why is Internet access important?

The purpose of Internet access in school is to raise educational standards, to support the professional work of staff and to enhance the School's management information and business administration systems;

Access to the Internet is a necessary tool for staff and students. It is an entitlement for students who show a responsible and mature approach.

3 What are the benefits to the School?

These benefits include:

Access to world-wide educational resources including museums and art galleries;

Information and cultural exchanges between students world-wide;

Cultural, vocational, social and leisure use in libraries, clubs and at home;

Discussion with experts in many fields for pupils and staff;

Staff professional development - access to educational materials and good curriculum practice;

Communication with the advisory and support services, professional associations and colleagues;

Improved access to technical support including remote management of networks;

Exchange of curriculum and administration data with the LEA and DCSF.

4 How will Internet use provide effective learning?

Internet access will be planned to enrich and extend learning activities. Access levels will be reviewed to reflect the curriculum requirement;

Pupils will be given clear objectives for Internet use;

Pupils will be educated in taking responsibility for Internet access.

5 How will pupils be taught to assess Internet content?

Pupils in school are unlikely to see inappropriate content in books due to selection by publisher and teacher. However, ICT teaching is widened to incorporate Internet content issues, for example the value and credibility of Web materials in relationship to other media. The tendency to use the Web when better information may be obtained from books may need to be challenged.

Pupils will be taught ways to validate information before accepting that it is necessarily accurate;

Pupils will be taught to acknowledge the source of information, when using Internet material for their own use.

6 How will email be managed?

Discussion: Email is an essential means of communication within education.

Pupils need to use email as part of the Curriculum.

Email content should not be considered private.

- Email must only be used in school for educational purposes;
- Pupils will be given individual email accounts on the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE);
- Incoming email will be regarded as public. Received email may be examined;
- Cyber-bullying is taken seriously and will result in sanctions being enforced;
- The forwarding of chain letters will be banned, as will the use of chat lines;
- Pupils will be allowed to access personal email from the school system.

7 How will publishing on the Web be managed?

Many schools have created websites that inspire pupils to publish work to a high standard, for a very wide audience. A website can celebrate pupils' work, promote the school and publish resources for projects or homework. Ground rules are important to ensure that the website reflects the school's ethos and that information is accurate and well presented.

As the school's website can be accessed by anyone on the Internet, the security of staff and pupils must be considered carefully. Pupils' identities will not be disclosed.

- Pupils will be made aware that all material must be the author's own work, or where permission to reproduce has been obtained, clearly marked with the copyright owner's name;
- Home information or individual email identities will not be published;
- Photographs will not identify individual pupils. Group shots or pictures taken over the shoulder will be used in preference to individual "passport" style images;
- Full names will not be used anywhere on the website, particularly alongside photographs;
- Written permission from parents will be sought before photographs of pupils are published on the School website;
- Access to the VLE will be restricted to account holders.

8 How will downloading from the Web be managed?

- Access to websites is restricted via the filtering system, however, where appropriate pupils may download content for educational use;
- Downloading of music and games is prohibited except where this content forms part of the Scheme of Work.

9 What other Internet applications are available?

The Internet is the underlying technology. New applications are being developed to use this ability to communicate, including conferencing applications such as Chat, Newsgroups and Webcams. Many of these facilities have great potential for education, for example pupils could exchange live text, speech or video with a similar class in South Africa or Italy, at low cost.

- Pupils will not be allowed to access public chat rooms, social networking sites or Instant Messaging;
- Pupils will not be allowed to carry mobile phones, mp3s, palm pads or equivalent technologies in school. Pupils who require a mobile phone must have written permission to bring it to school and it must be left in the school office during the day.

10 How will Internet access be authorised?

- Internet access is a necessary part of the statutory curriculum. It is an entitlement for pupils based on responsible use;
- Internet access will be granted to a whole class as part of the Scheme of Work, after a suitable education in responsible Internet use;
- Pupils and staff will be given a unique log-on identity allowing the School to trace all electronic activity. Advice is given on protecting the secrecy of passwords;
- Parents will be asked, annually, to sign and return the acceptable use policy (AUP) – a summary of which can be found in pupil organisers;
- On appointment, staff and student teachers will be asked to sign the acceptable use policy (AUP).

11 How will the risks be assessed?

Whilst the School acknowledges that it is difficult to completely remove the risk that pupils might access unsuitable materials via the school system, Internet access is protected by an approved filtering system.

- In common with other media such as magazines, books and video, some material available via the Internet is unsuitable for pupils. The School will supervise pupils and take all reasonable precautions to ensure that users access only appropriate material;
- The use of computer systems without permission or for purposes not agreed by the School could constitute a criminal offence under the Computer Misuse Act 1990;
- Methods to identify, assess and minimise risks will be reviewed;
- Staff, parents, governors and advisers will work to establish agreement that every reasonable measure is being taken;
- The Headteacher will ensure that the policy is implemented effectively.

12 How will the School ensure Internet access is safe?

Blocking strategies remove access to a list of unsuitable sites or newsgroups.

Maintenance of the blocking list is a major task as new sites appear every day.

Filtering examines the content of Web pages or email messages for unsuitable words.

Filtering of Web searches attempts to block as loopholes as they occur.

- Pupils and teachers will be informed that Internet use will be supervised and monitored;
- The School will work in partnership with parents, the LEA, DCSF and the Internet Service Provider to ensure systems to protect pupils are reviewed and improved;
- If staff or pupils discover unsuitable sites, the URL (address) and content will be reported to the Internet Service Provider via the ICT co-ordinator;
- Staff, whose Internet access requirements are different, will be provided with different but appropriate settings;
- Pupils will be made aware that the writer of an email or the author of a Web page might not be the person claimed;
- Pupils will be encouraged to tell a teacher immediately if they encounter any material that makes them feel uncomfortable.

13 How will the security of school ICT systems be maintained?

- Security strategies are discussed and reviewed with the LEA on a regular basis;
- The security of the whole system will be reviewed with regard to threats to security from Internet access;
- Virus protection is installed and updated regularly;
- Confidential data must only be carried on encrypted portable drives, for example memory sticks.

14 How will complaints regarding Internet use be handled?

Prompt action is taken if a complaint is made, including complaints of cyber-bullying.

The facts of the case will need to be established, for instance whether the issue has arisen through Internet use inside or outside school.

Transgressions of the rules could include the minor as well as the potentially serious, and a range of sanctions will be enforced, linked to the School's behaviour policy.

- Responsibility for handling incidents will be given to the appropriate members of staff and an incident log is kept;
- Pupils and parents will be informed of the complaints procedures;
- Parents and pupils will need to work in partnership with staff to resolve issues;
- Attempts to bypass the school's filtering system will result in sanctions being enforced;
- As with drugs issues, there may be occasions when the police must be contacted; Early contact will be made to establish the legal position and discuss strategies;
- Sanctions are in line with school behaviour policy;
- A pupil may have email, Internet or computer access denied for a period of time depending on the nature of the incident.

15 How will staff and pupils be consulted?

- The Acceptable Use Policy (summary) is printed in every pupil's organiser;
- All staff, including teachers, supply staff, classroom assistants and support staff, will be provided with the Internet Access Policy, and its importance explained;
- Parents' attention will be drawn to the Policy in the school prospectus and on the School website;
- A module on responsible Internet use will be included in the ICT Scheme of Work covering both school and home use.

16 How will parents' support be enlisted?

- A careful balance between informing and alarming parents will be maintained;
- The School aims to provide a parents information evening annually;
- The AUP will be posted on the school website;
- Parents are asked to sign the AUP in pupils' organisers at the start of the school year.

Acknowledgements: Adapted from http://www.ngfl.ac.uk/docs/Internet_policy.pdf
(March 2011)

References

Particularly for Parents

Government site for Parents (UK)

Information about education for parents www.direct.gov.uk/en/Parents

NCH Action for Children

A Parents' Guide to the Internet, leaflet www.actionforchildren.org.uk/content/764/NetSmart

Association for Co-ordinators and Teachers of IT (ACITT)

Acceptable Use Policy for UK Schools www.instantsecuritypolicy.com

Internet Watch Foundation www.iwf.org.uk