

Responsible Use of Digital Technology Policy

Digital technology is an important part of learning and of children's everyday lives. Our aim is not to discourage its use, but to help students develop the judgement, responsibility and self-discipline needed to use it safely and well.

Technology itself is not the problem. What matters is how, when and why it is used. The same device or platform can support learning, creativity and communication when used responsibly, but can also cause harm when used without appropriate limits or respect for others.

1. School-provided devices and accounts

School-provided laptops, tablets, Microsoft Teams accounts and other digital resources are provided primarily to support learning. Students are expected to use them responsibly, look after them carefully and follow school instructions concerning their use.

Students must use only their own accounts and keep passwords and login details private. They must not access another person's account, install unauthorised software or applications, alter security settings, attempt to bypass school restrictions or interfere with the normal operation of a device or network.

Damage, loss or technical problems involving school equipment should be reported promptly.

Providing students with access to technology also means teaching them to look after it and use it responsibly. School devices and accounts are educational tools, and the safeguards placed around them are there to protect students, information and the wider school community.

2. Respectful online behaviour

Students must communicate online with the same respect expected of them face-to-face. Messages, calls, posts, group chats and other online interactions must not be used to insult, embarrass, threaten, exclude or deliberately upset another person. Cyberbullying, harassment, impersonation, deliberate exclusion or encouraging others to target another person will not be tolerated. Students should not participate in conversations or groups which they know are being used to hurt or humiliate others.

Students must also not use editing tools, artificial intelligence or other technology to create or circulate false, offensive or misleading images, audio, video, messages or other material involving another person.

Online behaviour can sometimes feel less serious because people are not physically together. The impact on another person, however, can be just as real. Behaviour which would be unacceptable in the classroom does not become acceptable simply because it takes place behind a screen.

3. Use outside school hours

Students may use a wide range of digital devices and platforms outside school, including school-provided devices, personal laptops or tablets, mobile phones, gaming devices and online communication platforms.

Students should not use digital technology excessively, late at night or in ways which interfere with sleep, school attendance, learning, family life or wellbeing. This includes prolonged or late-night messaging, calls, gaming and other online activity. Parents are expected to establish age-appropriate and consistent boundaries concerning when devices may be used, what they may be used for and when they should be switched off or put away.

Being able to access a device or platform at any time does not mean that it should be used at any time. Learning to stop, disconnect and recognise when enough is enough is an important part of developing self-discipline. Online behaviour outside school can also affect relationships, wellbeing and learning within school. Where it has a direct impact on students or school life, the school may need to address its consequences.

4. Privacy, personal information and digital footprints

Students must respect their own privacy and that of others. They should not share passwords, personal information, photographs, screenshots, recordings, private conversations, home addresses, telephone numbers or live location without appropriate permission.

Students must not photograph, film, record or take screenshots of other students, members of staff, online meetings, messages or school activities unless this has been clearly authorised.

Students should also understand that what they say and do online may leave a record. Messages, images and other digital activity can be saved, copied or shared even when something appears to have been deleted.

Students should use age-appropriate digital platforms and exercise particular caution when communicating with people they do not know in real life.

Once information, an image or a message has been shared digitally, control over it can easily be lost. Protecting personal information, respecting the privacy of others and thinking before posting or sharing are essential parts of responsible digital behaviour.

5. Harmful or inappropriate content

Students who receive hurtful messages, inappropriate material or content which makes them uncomfortable should not continue the exchange or forward the material to others.

They should tell a trusted adult and, where appropriate, keep relevant evidence so that the matter can be addressed.

Children will sometimes encounter things online that they did not seek out or do not know how to handle. Asking for help is part of using technology safely and responsibly.

6. Artificial intelligence and schoolwork

The school recognises that artificial intelligence can be a useful tool for learning, creativity and problem-solving. Students may be introduced to appropriate uses of AI as part of their education and under the guidance of teachers.

Students must not use AI to produce work which they then present as their own unless its use has been specifically permitted. Where AI is allowed, students must follow the teacher's instructions and be open about how it has been used.

AI should not replace the thinking, reading, writing, calculating, researching or problem-solving that students are expected to learn to do themselves. The same principle applies to copying work from websites, other students or other digital sources.

Teachers may ask students to explain their work, show how it was produced or complete part of a task independently where there is doubt about authorship.

AI can help us do more, but children still need to develop the skills that allow them to understand and evaluate what it produces. In simple terms, children need to learn to walk before they can run. The purpose of schoolwork is not simply to produce a finished answer; it is to develop the knowledge and skills needed to arrive at that answer.

7. Accuracy and critical thinking

Students should not assume that everything they see online is accurate or genuine. Information produced by websites, search engines, social media platforms or AI tools should be considered critically and checked where appropriate.

Students should also understand that photographs, videos, voices and other digital material may have been edited, manipulated or artificially generated.

Digital content can be convincing without being correct. Learning to question information, compare sources and recognise that something may have been altered or generated is an important part of becoming digitally responsible.

8. Consequences of misuse

Where a student misuses a school-provided device, account or digital platform, the school may restrict access, remove particular privileges, require work to be completed in another way or take other appropriate action.

Serious or repeated misuse, including cyberbullying, harassment, impersonation, offensive communication, unauthorised recording, deliberate breaches of privacy, misuse of AI or attempts to bypass school security measures, will be treated according to the seriousness of the behaviour.

Where digital behaviour outside school has a direct impact on students, relationships or the safe and orderly running of the school, the school may also take appropriate action.

Access to digital technology brings responsibility. Where that responsibility is not exercised appropriately, limits may need to be introduced until safe and responsible use can be demonstrated.

9. Shared responsibility between school and home

The school will teach and reinforce responsible digital behaviour within the school setting. Parents are encouraged to remain aware of how their children are using digital devices and online platforms and to reinforce the expectations set out in this policy at home.

Depending on the child's age, this may include monitoring online interactions, call activity, browsing history and other device use, as well as talking openly about respectful communication, privacy, AI, inappropriate contact and the importance of asking an adult for help.

The school cannot supervise what happens in the home, just as parents cannot observe what happens at school. Children benefit most when school and home reinforce the same expectations: respect others, protect privacy, use technology in moderation, think critically and ask for help when something feels wrong.

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