

Gatehouse School

**Use of the Internet
School Policy**

September 2005

Use of the Internet -A Policy for Gatehouse School

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1. Introduction

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 pupils. It should be seen as an entitlement for pupils who show a responsible and mature approach.

Usually, the resources used by pupils in school are carefully chosen by the teacher and determined by curriculum policies. Use of the Internet, by its nature, will provide access to information which may not always have been selected by the teacher.

Whilst pupils will often be directed to sites which provide reviewed and evaluated sources, at times, they will be able to move beyond these, to sites unfamiliar to the teacher. The problems and issues that have been highlighted by the media concern all schools. Whilst some of the media interest is hype, there is genuine cause for concern that children might access unsuitable material either accidentally or deliberately.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Establish the ground rules we have in school for using the Internet
- Demonstrate the methods used to protect pupils from inappropriate sites

The school believes that the benefits to pupils from access to the resources of the Internet, far exceed the disadvantages. Ultimately, the responsibility for setting and conveying the standards that children are expected to follow, when using media and information resources, is one the school shares with parents/guardians. We feel that the best recipe for success lies in a combination of site-filtering, of supervision, and by fostering a responsible attitude in our

pupils in partnership with parents. Parents will be sent an explanatory letter and the rules which form our Internet Access Agreement (Appendix2).

2. Using the Internet for Education

The Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED) set targets for ICT use in all schools through the National Grid for Learning (NGfL) initiative supported by the Excellence Fund Programme. A number of studies and government project indicated the benefits to be gained through the appropriate use of the Internet in education.

The benefits include:

- Access to world-wide educational resources including museums and art galleries
- Inclusion in government initiatives such as NGfL and the Scottish Virtual Teacher Centre(SVTC)
- Information and cultural exchanges between pupils 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 Education Department and the Scottish Executive Education Department.

This school intends to teach pupils about the vast information resources available on the Internet, using it as a planned part of many lessons. All staff will play a part in reviewing and evaluating resources available on web sites appropriate to the age range and ability of the pupils being taught and the Head Teacher/ICT Co-ordinator will assist in the dissemination of this information.

Initially, pupils may be restricted to sites which have been reviewed and selected for content. They may be given tasks to perform using a specific group of web sites accessed from a common 'Favourites' menu on the school 'Intranet'. Pupils will have the opportunity to exchange information via e-mail. They are taught how to use the address book, how to attach files to an e-mail and how to follow conventions of politeness.

As pupils gain experience, they are taught how to use searching techniques to locate specific information for themselves. Comparisons are made between researching from different sources of information, (CD-Rom, books, WWW). We expect that pupils learn to decide when it is appropriate to use the Internet, as opposed to other sources of information, in terms of:

- the time taken
- the amount of information found, and
- the usefulness and reliability of information located.

At times, information, such as text, photos etc. may be “downloaded” from the Internet for pupil use.

3. Pupils’ Access to the Internet

Internet access has been purchased by the Education Authority from a supplier that provides a service designed for pupils. This includes:

- Filtering appropriate to the age of school pupils,
- Internet access planned to enrich and extend learning activities,
- Access levels reviewed to reflect the curriculum requirement,
- Pupils provided with clear objectives for Internet use,
- Staff selecting sites which will support the learning outcomes planned for pupils’ age and maturity,
- Approved sites ‘bookmarked’, listed and, where appropriate and copyright permits, beaded to the school intranet,
- Pupils educated in taking responsibility for their own Internet access,
- Pupils taught ways to validate information before accepting that it is necessarily accurate,
- Pupils taught to acknowledge the source of information, when using Internet material for their own use,
- Pupils made aware that the writer of an e-mail or the author of a Web page might not be the person claimed,
- Pupils encouraged to tell a teacher immediately if they encounter any material that makes them feel uncomfortable,
- Pupils not allowed to access chat rooms,
- New applications thoroughly tested before pupils are given access.

4. Pupils using the Internet

All pupils are expected to read (along with their parents/guardians) and agree the Internet Access Agreement (Appendix 1). Within this agreement the following expectations are made clear:

- At this school, we expect all pupils to be responsible for their own behaviour on the Internet, just as they are anywhere else in school. This includes materials they choose to access and language they use.
- Pupils using the World Wide Web are expected not to deliberately seek out offensive materials. Should any pupils encounter any such material accidentally, they are expected to report it immediately to a teacher, so that the Service Provider can block further access to the site.
- Pupils are expected not to use any rude language in their e-mail communications and contact only people they know or those the teacher has approved. They have been taught the rules of etiquette in e-mail and are expected to follow them.
- Pupils must ask permission before accessing the Internet and have a clear idea why they are using it.
- Pupils should not access other people's files unless permission has been given.

- Computers should only be used for schoolwork and homework unless permission has been granted otherwise.
- No program files may be downloaded to the computer from the Internet. This is to prevent corruption of data and avoid viruses.
- No programs on disc or CD Rom should be brought in from home for use in school. This is for both legal and security reasons.
- Homework completed at home may be brought in on floppy disc but this will have to be *virus-scanned by the class teacher* before use.
- No personal information such as phone numbers and addresses should be given out and no arrangements to meet someone made unless this is part of an approved school project.
- Pupils consistently choosing not to comply with these expectations will be warned, and subsequently, may be denied access to Internet resources. They will also come under the general discipline procedures of the school which comprises an escalating set of measures including a letter to parents and withdrawal of privileges

5. Risk Assessment and Safe Access

It is a fact that, 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. However, due to the international scale and linked nature of information available via the internet, it is not possible to guarantee that unsuitable material will never appear on a terminal.

Neither the school nor Dumfries and Galloway Council can accept liability for the material accessed, or any consequences thereof.

That being acknowledged, the school in partnership with parents and the LEA will take the following steps/measures to ensure, as far as possible, safe access to the internet:

- Methods to identify, assess and minimise risks will be reviewed regularly,
- Staff, parents, and Education Department Officers will work to establish agreement that every reasonable measure is being taken,
- Security strategies will be discussed with the Education Department,
- The security of the whole system will be reviewed with regard to threats to security from Internet access,
- Personal data sent over the internet will be encrypted or otherwise secured.

It should be noted that 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

6. Pupils using E-mail

E-mail is an essential means of communication within education. The government encourages the ownership of personal e-mail IDs for both teachers and pupils, but care needs to be taken to establish the implications for the school and for the pupils. To control the use of e-mail in this school, teachers must make the following points clear to pupils:

- E-mail must only be used in school for educational purposes,
- Pupils in P1-3 stages may send e-mail as part of planned lessons but will not be given individual e-mail accounts,
- Pupils will not be allowed to access personal e-mail from the school system unless it constitutes part of a curriculum project being undertaken by the class/school,
- Pupils from P4 onwards will be given individual e-mail accounts. This assumes a high level of trust and pupils and/or parents will be asked to sign the Acceptable Use Statement,
- In-coming e-mail will be regarded as public. *Received e-mail may be examined.*
- Messages sent using the school domain name should be regarded in the same way as messages written on school headed paper,
- The forwarding of chain letters will be banned, as will the use of chat lines,
- Excessive social chit-chat wastes pupils' time and computer resources and is discouraged.

7. A School Website

Our school website celebrates good work, promotes the school, publishes resources for projects and homework, and links to other good sites of interest. Ground rules are important to ensure that the website reflects the school's ethos and that information is accurate and well presented.

In this school, pupils may be involved with the design, construction and maintenance of the school website. As it can be accessed by anyone on the internet, the security of staff and pupils must be carefully considered.

Accordingly, in respect of the website, the following measures are implemented:

- The Head Teacher takes, or delegates to a member of staff, editorial responsibility to ensure that content is accurate and quality of presentation is maintained,
- The web site complies with the school's guidelines for publications,
- Pupils are made aware that the quality of their work published on the web needs to reflect the diversity of the audience,
- 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,
- The points of contact on the web site are the school address/e-mail address and telephone number,
- Home information or individual e-mail identities is not published,

- Photographs do not identify individual pupils,
- Group shots or pictures taken “over the shoulder” are used in preference to individual “passport” style images,
- Full names are not be used anywhere on the website, particularly alongside photographs,
- Written permission from parents is sought before photographs of pupils are published on the website.

8. Internet Access Agreement-Pupil Version

All pupils and their parents / guardians are asked to read an agreement covering the expectations we have of pupils using the internet in school.

If a pupil is in a P1, P2 or P3 class, a parent/guardian will sign the agreement on behalf of the child. A pupil in P4 upwards must also personally sign the agreement.

Note: The school requires to keep a formal record of the signed Pupil Internet Agreement.

The Pupil Internet Agreement (*Appendix 1*) should be:

- sent home by pupil post,
- read and agreed by pupils together with a parent/parents,
- signed by either a parent or guardian or by both the pupil and a parent or guardian,
- returned to the Head Teacher and filed in the school office.

*Appendix 1***The Pupil Internet Access Agreement**

This is to be read through with your parent(s) and then signed. At this school, we expect all pupils to be responsible for their own behaviour on the Internet, just as they are anywhere else in school. This includes materials they choose to access, and language they use.

Pupils using the World Wide Web are expected not to deliberately seek out offensive materials. Should any pupils encounter any such material accidentally, they are expected to report it immediately to a teacher

Pupils are expected not to use any rude language in their email communications and contact only people they know or those the teacher has approved. It is forbidden to be involved in sending chain letters

Pupils must ask permission before accessing the Internet

Pupils should not access other people's files unless permission has been given

Computers should only be used for schoolwork and homework unless permission has been granted otherwise

No program files may be downloaded to the computer from the Internet

No programs on disc or CD Rom should be brought in from home for use in school unless with approval of the head teacher or class teacher

Homework completed at home may be brought in on floppy disc but this will have to be virus scanned by the class teacher before use

Personal printing is not allowed on our network for cost reasons (e.g. pictures of pop groups/cartoon characters)

No personal information such as phone numbers and addresses should be given out and no arrangements to meet someone made unless this is part of an approved school project

Pupils consistently choosing not to comply with these expectations will be warned, and subsequently, may be denied access to Internet resources.

I have read through this agreement with my child and agree to these safety restrictions.

Name of child/children: _____(PRINTED)

Signed: _____(Parent/Guardian)

Signed: _____(Pupil/Pupils of P4 upwards)

Appendix 2

Letter to Parents (Responsible use of the Internet)

Dear Parents

Responsible Use of ICT

As part of pupils' curriculum enhancement and the development of ICT skills, this school provides supervised access to the Internet including e-mail.

Although there have been concerns about pupils having access to undesirable materials, we are taking positive steps to deal with this risk in school. Our school Internet access provider operates a filtering system that restricts access to inappropriate materials.

Whilst every endeavour is made to ensure that suitable restrictions are placed on the ability of children to access inappropriate materials, Dumfries and Galloway Council cannot be held responsible for the nature or content of materials accessed through the Internet. The Council will not be liable, under any circumstances, for any damages arising from your child's use of the Internet facilities.

I enclose a copy of the 'School Pupil Internet Access Agreement', which we ask you – and, if relevant, your son/daughter - to sign for access to the school's ICT services.

If you would like to have a look at our full 'Policy for Internet Access', I can forward you a copy - particularly by email as this is cost free to the school. A paper copy will be sent home if you request it. It is also available on our school website at www.gatehouseschool.org.uk .

You can always e-mail us at gatehouseschool@btinternet.com .

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher