



Errigal College Letterkenny

Acceptable Usage Policy

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3. November 2024: Removal of Twitter and addition of X and Instagram made to heading (3.8), addition of Artificial Intelligence (3.11).

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1. Mission Statement

Our Mission Statement:

To enable each student to achieve his/her educational potential, in partnership with parents, based on the principles of caring, dignity, mutual respect and equality.

We are an ETB school, state, co-educational and multi-denominational, underpinned by the core values of:

- Excellence in Education
- Care
- Equality
- Community
- Respect



2. General Approach

The aim of this Internet Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) is to ensure that students will benefit from the 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. If the school AUP is not adhered to this privilege may be withdrawn and appropriate sanctions will be imposed.

When using the internet students, parents and staff are expected:

- To treat others with respect at all times.
- Not to undertake any actions that may bring the school into disrepute.
- Respect the right to privacy of all other members of the school community.

- Respect copyright and acknowledge creators when using online content and resources.

Misuse of the internet may result in disciplinary action, including written warnings, withdrawal of access privileges, detention and, in extreme cases, suspension or expulsion. The school also reserves the right to report any illegal activities to the appropriate authorities.

Errigal College will deal with incidents that take place outside the school that impact on the wellbeing of or pose a threat to the welfare of students or staff under this policy, the school's Code of Behaviour and the school's Anti-Bullying Policy. In such cases Errigal College will, where known, inform parents/carers of incidents of inappropriate online behaviour that take place out of school and impose the appropriate sanctions.

3. School Strategy

3.1 General

Errigal College implements the following strategies in order to maximise learning opportunities, reduce risks and promote (on promoting) safer use of the internet:

- Internet sessions will always be supervised by a teacher.
- Virus protection software will be used and updated on a regular basis.
- The use of digital storage devices (such as a USB drive) in school requires a teacher's permission.
- **Content Filtering:** Errigal College has chosen to implement the following level of content filtering on the School's Broadband Network:

Level 3: This level allows access to millions of websites including games and YouTube but blocks access to websites belonging to the personal websites category and websites such as Facebook belonging to the Social Networking category.

- Students taking steps to by-pass the content filter by using proxy sites or other means may be subject to disciplinary action, including written warnings, withdrawal of access privileges, detention and, in extreme cases, suspension or expulsion.
- Students will be provided with education in the area of internet safety as part of our implementation of the SPHE, CSPE and Wellbeing curricula. Internet safety advice and support opportunities are also provided to students in Errigal College through our induction, pastoral care and ICT and Coding programmes.
- Teachers will be provided with continuing professional development opportunities in the area of internet safety.
- Errigal College participates in Safer Internet Day activities to promote safer, more effective use of the internet.
- Students will treat others with respect at all times on social networking sites and will not undertake any actions that may bring the school into disrepute.

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed annually in consultation with the following stakeholders: Board of Management, teaching staff, support staff, students, and parents.

The school will monitor the impact of the policy using: Surveys/questionnaires of students, parents and teaching staff.

Should serious online safety incidents take place, Mr McFadden or Ms Markham should be informed.

The implementation of this Internet Acceptable Use policy will be monitored by the Digital Learning Team

3.2 Web Browsing and Downloading

Users will not intentionally visit internet sites that contain obscene, illegal, hateful or otherwise objectionable materials.

Students will report accidental accessing of inappropriate materials in the classroom to their teacher.

Students will report accidental accessing of inappropriate materials in school but outside the classroom to Mr McFadden or Ms Markham.

Users will not copy information from the internet without acknowledging the creator and referencing the source of the content. The school may check for plagiarism using online tools as are available for such purposes. The school will encourage students who create original content to claim ownership of it using a Creative Commons licence.

Users 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.

Students will not engage in online activities such as uploading or downloading large files that result in heavy network traffic which impairs the service for other internet users.

Students will not download or view any material that is illegal, obscene, and defamatory or that is intended to annoy or intimidate another person. Use of file sharing of copyright material and torrent sites is not allowed.

3.3 Email and Messaging

Every student and staff member is provided with a donegaletb school email address. Students must only use this school email account for school related activities and for registering on school based activities only. The use of personal email accounts is not allowed at Errigal College.

Students should not under any circumstances share their email account login details with other students.

Students should not use school email accounts to register for online services such as social networking services, apps, and games.

Students should be aware that email communications are monitored.

Email may not be used for commercial purposes for personal/non-educational gain.

Students will not send any material that is illegal, obscene, and defamatory or that is intended to annoy or intimidate another person.

Students should immediately report the receipt of any communication that makes them feel uncomfortable, is offensive, discriminatory, threatening or bullying in nature and must not respond to any such communication.

Students should avoid opening emails that appear suspicious. If in doubt, students should ask their teacher before opening emails from unknown senders.

All views and opinions expressed in email are the responsibility of the author.

Do not forward email messages (including Reply All) without the permission of the originator.

3.4 Social Media

Staff and students must not use social media and the internet in any way to harass, impersonate, insult, abuse or defame students, their family members, staff or other members of the Errigal College community.

Staff and students must not discuss personal information about students, staff and other members of the Errigal College community on social media.

Staff and students must not use school email addresses for setting up personal social media accounts or to communicate through such media.

Staff and students must not engage in activities involving social media which might bring Errigal College into disrepute.

Staff and students must not represent their personal views as those of Errigal College on any social medium.

3.5 Personal Devices

Students may use technologies that are provided by the school for educational purposes. In certain cases, (e.g. Computer Science) students may use their own laptop/Chromebook with agreement from the subject teacher. PLC students may use their own laptop/Chromebook under the following conditions:

- Antivirus software must be up to date
- Students must follow the rules set out in this policy, in the same way as if they were using school equipment.

The use of mobile phones and the visibility of personal electronic devices are prohibited in school i.e. earphones/earbuds/speakers are not to be used nor are they to be visible during the school day. The school does not permit the streaming of music through mobile devices at any time. If a device is brought to school, it should be switched off and stored in a student's bag/secured in a student's locker. 'Switched off' implies that the phone or device is powered off at all times. The use of mobile phones or devices will result in them being collected and retained by the Principal or Deputy Principal (please see further information in the Code of Positive Behaviour) for a period of time.

3.6 Images & Video

Care should be taken when taking photographic or video images that students are appropriately dressed and are not participating in activities that might bring the individuals or the school into disrepute.

At Errigal College students must not take, use, share, publish or distribute images of others without their permission.

Taking photos or videos on school grounds or when participating in school activities is only allowed with expressed permission from staff.

Students must not share images, videos or other content online with the intention to harm another member of the school community regardless of whether this happens in school or outside.

Sharing explicit images and in particular explicit images of students and/or minors is an unacceptable and absolutely prohibited behaviour, with serious consequences and sanctions for those involved. Sharing explicit images of other students automatically incurs suspension as a sanction and will be reported to the appropriate authorities.

3.7 Cyberbullying

When using the internet, all users are expected to treat others with respect at all times. Engaging in online activities with the intention to harm, harass, or embarrass another student or member of staff is an unacceptable and absolutely prohibited behaviour, with serious consequences and sanctions for those involved.

Measures are taken by Errigal College to ensure that staff and students are aware that bullying is defined as unwanted negative behaviour, verbal, psychological or physical, conducted by an individual or group against another person (or persons) and which is repeated over time. This definition includes cyberbullying even when it happens outside the school or at night.

Isolated or once-off incidents of intentional negative behaviour, including a once-off offensive or hurtful text message or other private messaging, do not fall within the definition of bullying and will be dealt with, as appropriate, in accordance with the school's code of behaviour.

The prevention of cyberbullying is an integral part of the anti-bullying policy of our school and is covered in the SPHE curriculum.

3.8 School Website, Facebook, X, Instagram and YouTube accounts

Students will be given the opportunity to publish projects, artwork or school work on the internet in accordance with clear policies and approval processes regarding the content that can be loaded to the school's website and social media channels.

The website and social media channels will be regularly checked to ensure that there is no content that compromises the safety, privacy, or reputation of students or staff.

The publication of student work will be coordinated by members of the social media team. Errigal College seeks image consent from parents upon enrolment and permission can be withdrawn at any time without prejudice and without explanation.

Personal student information including home address and contact details will not be published on any of Errigal College web pages.

The purpose of having school social media channels is to provide:

- Communication with parents and students regarding specific events and communication with new or prospective parents.
- Communication with the wider audience regarding positive advertisement of the school and enrolment dates.
- Continued advancement of our school communication system.

Those using our social networking sites must abide by the following:

- Users cannot advertise non-school related products or services on our social media channels.
- Users should not post anything that could be deemed as offensive – inappropriate or harmful comments/content will be removed immediately.
- Users should not ask to become “friends” with staff on Facebook as failure to response may cause offence.
- Users cannot tag or post photographs of students on the page.
- Users should not add comments that can identify students.
- To use Facebook, one must be 13 years of age or older.

- Comments on YouTube are disabled and comments, replies, tweets and private/direct messages on Facebook, X and Instagram closely monitored.
- The sanction for breaking these rules is automatic removal from our Facebook page and users may be reported through the social media channel's reporting system.

3.9 Online Learning Platforms

Our school uses Google Classroom as a support to class teaching and learning and during periods of school closure.

Students should be aware that communication on Classroom is monitored.

Students should join classes as a student and only join classes that they are members of.

Students should not seek to join another class or enable others to do so.

Communication between students and teachers must at all times be appropriate, respectful and relevant. The posting of inappropriate or offensive material will result in sanctions being applied in line with the Code of Behaviour.

Teachers reserve the right to switch off the 'comment' function on the platform.

Students using Google Sites must not publish their sites publically.

3.10 Video-conferencing

Our school utilises video conferencing during periods of school closure to facilitate distance learning - Google Meet is the live communication platform option for our students and staff. It is expected that students and staff will use the platform in a professional and ethical manner for the purpose of teaching, learning and assessment.

Students must only access a Meet using their donegaletb account. Students will not be admitted if using a personal account.

Google Meet, as a school channel, must only be used with a teacher or management representative present in the communication.

Students must always follow the direction of their teacher just as in the classroom

Video and microphone must be off unless the teacher asks students to do otherwise. In any case, all microphones should be on mute when a person is not speaking to avoid distracting background noise being broadcast to everyone.

A Meet link is intended for students in a particular class only. The teacher will decide who should receive the link. Do not forward any link to anyone else.

Recording of Meet classes by a student is strictly forbidden. ¹ Interactive Classroom meets should not be recorded.

Students and teachers must be dressed appropriately and there should be nothing inappropriate to be seen or heard in the background.

Students and Staff should never;

- Post, stream or transmit any content, including live video, that violates this Policy in such a way that is offensive to students/staff.
- Do anything illegal, facilitate any illegal activity, or promote violence.
- Do anything that threatens, exploits or otherwise harms children or fellow students.
- Engage in any activity that is harmful, obscene, or indecent. This includes offensive gestures, displays of nudity, violence, pornography, sexually explicit material, or criminal activity.
- Engage in any activity that is fraudulent, false, or misleading.
- Engage in any activity that is defamatory, harassing, threatening or abusive.
- Store or transmit any data or material that is fraudulent, unlawful, harassing, libellous, threatening, obscene, indecent or otherwise inappropriate.
- Send unauthorised messages or irrelevant material.
- Misrepresent a user's identity or affiliation with any entity or organisation, or impersonate any other person.
- Harvest, collect, or gather user data without consent.
- Violate or infringe any intellectual property or proprietary rights of others, including copyrights.
- Violate the privacy of others or distribute confidential or personal information of

1. Donegal ETB (2021). Data Protection Protocols for Online Teaching

3.11 Artificial Intelligence

- Errigal College recognises the potential benefits of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in education and is committed to its responsible and ethical use within our learning environment.
- Errigal College integrates AI into its educational processes to enhance learning, foster innovation, and promote the development of critical skills.
- The selection of AI tools and technologies in Errigal College aligns with educational goals, including supporting learner agency and promoting critical thinking.
- AI Generated material is allowed for certain activities with prior school permission.
- AI generated material is not allowed in place of student work (homework, assignments, examinations).
- AI Generated material is allowed for the purpose of research, brainstorming, or revising text. Note: If used for research students must factcheck, check other sources and reference sources.
- Learners must attribute AI text and images properly when used in assignments/homework.
- Entering personal, sensitive, or confidential data into any AI system without proper authorisation is strictly prohibited.
- Students will not create, share or send any AI generated material that is illegal, obscene, and defamatory or that is intended to annoy or intimidate another person.
- Staff and pupils must not use AI in any way to harass, insult, abuse or defame pupils, their family members, staff, other members of the Errigal College community.
- Staff and pupils must not engage in activities involving AI generated material which might bring Errigal College into disrepute.
- Errigal College promotes digital literacy and critical thinking skills to help students understand AI, its implications, and responsible usage. This includes data literacy, verification of AI-generated information, and recognising potential biases in AI tools.
- Errigal College will make necessary adjustments to the AI integration strategy based on assessments and feedback.
- Entering personal, sensitive, or confidential data into any AI system without proper authorisation is strictly prohibited. All AI tools authorised for use in Errigal College comply with data protection regulations.

4. Legislation

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

- Data Protection (Amendment) Act 2003
- Child Trafficking and Pornography Act 1998
- Interception Act 1993
- Video Recordings Act 1989
- The Data Protection Act 2018

5. Permission Form

I agree to follow the school's Acceptable Use Policy on the use of the Internet. I will use the Internet in a responsible way and obey all the rules explained to me by the school.

Student's Signature:	
Parent/Guardian:	
Date:	

As the parent or legal guardian of the above student, I have read the Acceptable Use Policy and grant permission for my son or daughter or the child in my care to access the Internet. I understand that Internet access is intended for educational purposes. I also understand that every reasonable precaution has been taken by the school to provide for online safety but the school cannot be held responsible if students access unsuitable websites.

In relation to the school website, I accept that, if the school considers it appropriate, my child's schoolwork may be chosen for inclusion on the school website/social media platforms.

I understand and accept the terms of the Acceptable Use Policy relating to publishing students' work on the school website.

Signature:	
Date:	
Address:	

Please review the attached school Internet Acceptable Use Policy, and sign and return this permission form to the school.

Name of Student:	
Year:	
Student Signature:	

* This form is also available as an online Google Form.

Signed: _____

Donal Coyle

(Chairperson of the Board of Management)

Signed: _____

Danny McFadden

(Principal)