Policy on the use of technology for Remote e-learning

Ratified by the Board of Management December 2020

Signed: *Tereasa McGuire*   Signed: *Michael Walshe*

    Chairperson   Principal

Introduction

Saint Brendan's College is a school under the patronage of Mayo Sligo Leitrim Education and Training Board (MSLETB).

As a school under the patronage of MSLETB and who take instruction from the Department of Education and Skills, it is of paramount importance that we have policies to ensure that procedures are in place that fulfil our statutory obligations.

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines and information to students, their parents/guardians, and staff, surrounding the use of technology when learning remotely i.e. from a place other than school and where it is not possible for the teacher to deliver the class within the same location, as would be the case, if the class was taking place in a classroom setting. While this policy informs best practice for remote learning and the use of online technologies during normal school term, it is devised in response to the Covid-19 emergency and is intended to provide guidance for the conduct of remote teaching and learning during an extended unforeseen school closure.

 This policy does not set out to replace our **Acceptable Usage Policy** but rather intends to be an important addition to the area of learning from a digital platform. The policy presented here should be read also in tandem with our school's Code of Behaviour, Acceptable Use Policy and Anti-Bullying (including Cyber Bullying) Policy.

Staff members should read this policy in tandem with MSLETB's INFORMATION and COMMUNTCATIONS TECHNOLOGY (ICT) ACCEPTAPLE USAGE POLICY. The primary obligations that all schools have are to the welfare of the learners in their school. This policy, therefore, seeks to ensure that remote learning is safe for all student learners under Child Protection Policy and that their data is also protected under GDPR legislation. Schools must ensure that learning may be able to take place in an environment that is respectful and fair and meets its statutory duties. This Policy is prepared, therefore, in accordance with the provisions of the Department of Education & Skills and relevant sections of:

- The Education Act (1998) Education (Welfare) Act (2000)
- Equal Status Act (2000) Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004)
- Disability Act (2005)
- Children First 2017
- GDPR
- Department of Education: Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary schools
- NEWB Guidelines for Developing a Code of Behaviour (2008).

Context

Teaching and Learning is always evolving, especially, as we move deeper into the 21st century. Developments in IT provide us all with great opportunities as learners and teachers. Never before has there been greater scope to learn using technology and it continues to change the learning relationship between teachers and students.

Advances in technology mean that assignments can be delivered remotely and that greater access to information on the internet affords the opportunities for real learning to take place under the watchful and professional guidance of the teacher.

However, whether a child is being directed remotely or via a traditional classroom environment, it is very important that all partners are aware that once a learning exchange takes place between a student and teacher, whether at home or school, the same statutory rules apply i.e. the school's Code of Behaviour and all of the school's policies.

This Policy has been developed during the Covid-19 Pandemic, when remote teaching and learning was imposed on the school community, without prior knowledge and preparation. Saint Brendan's College endeavours to make it very clear to all partners that the values that are instilled in all policies remain, no matter how we change our teaching and learning methodologies or the location of that teaching and learning. This includes remote learning or when a child is being taught in an environment that is not within the school building and the teacher may be working remotely and is not present with the student(s).

Guidelines on the appropriate use of Online Platforms for engaging in remote teaching and learning

Saint Brendan's College encourages all students to use Microsoft Office 365. All students have been given account details. If problems arise with Microsoft Office 365 they should contact stbrendanscollege@msletb.ie.

Microsoft Teams is a very useful tool for remote teaching and learning.

The primary online platform our school is currently using is Microsoft Teams. This may change in time but the sentiment and instructions within this policy shall remain valid no matter what platform we use in the future.

1. Teachers when working remotely will on most occasions try to communicate online during normal working hours and will endeavour not to communicate with students outside of these hours. However, everyone's circumstance is different, and we have to be as accommodating to all members of our school community as we can, especially in these uncertain times. Parents and students need to be aware that teachers may have to send material/ assignments outside of regular school opening hours. This does not mean there is an expectation on the student to begin work at the time it is received. Likewise, there is never an expectation on the teacher to have to correct or comment on work sent via Office365 outside of normal school hours. Whilst it might suit teachers or students to communicate outside of normal working hours, it is essential that everyone agrees that responses or actions outside of normal working hours are not required. We would urge all members of the school community to turn off notifications outside of their learning/working hours

2. In so far as possible, provision for SEN students, will be made when using Remote Learning methodologies.

3. No matter what time a student and/ or teacher is on Office365 i.e. whether the teacher is online giving a tutorial or not- the moment a student logs onto Office365 they must abide by the school rules and the rules will be implemented if and when necessary.

 4. Students cannot choose to leave a Team once a teacher has created one.

 5. The material created by the teacher on Teams is the property of the teacher and students do not have permission to share with others outside of the Team unless given permission to do so. Recordings should not be made of any online tutorial unless with explicit permission from the teacher. In this instance, it is of utmost importance that any such recordings are not shared.

6. Teachers may choose to conduct live classes. Microsoft Teams conference might be used. We would like to avoid the scenario of students being compelled to disable their webcams and/or muting their audio. In order to avoid this scenario, we are using a high trust model. Teachers will trust students to behave appropriately online, as they would in their real classroom. Students' attire must be suitable. **Students will not record the class unless with the prior permission of the teacher conducting the live online class**. If a recording is made with the permission of the teacher, it cannot be shared with anyone outside of the class.

7. Teachers are the owners/ managers of the Teams they create. Most Teams will be whole class groups but this may vary. When students are invited onto and put into a Team it is the exact same as being in the classroom and being with a class group. They have a teacher and the school's same rules continue to apply.

8. A teacher will only correspond to a student who is signed up to the correct Platform i.e. Office365

9. A teacher will only correspond and engage with a student who is using and is logged into their MSLETB account.

10. Social media sites e.g. Facebook, Snapchat, Hangouts, WhatsApp etc, to communicate with students is never permissible and teachers have been advised accordingly. Social media may be used by teachers to demonstrate examples of good work to parents and the wider school community, but will not be used for the conduct of teaching and learning. Any such activity will only be on the official school social media account (Facebook and Twitter). All student names on student work should be redacted.

11. Other Teams created by students themselves within a Team created by the teacher is not permitted.

12. Any behaviour or language deemed inappropriate during school applies online and after established school times. The consequences for such behaviour will be the same as if the student was in school as they are involved in prescribed school work, on a school created platform using a school log-in and which has been directed by school personnel.

13. Any language directed towards a fellow student or teacher that is very aggressive/ threatening or offensive may also be reported to the Gardaí or TUSLA or both.

14. The criteria for mandated Child Protection reporting remains the same as if the child was being taught in school.

15. All provisions relating to the child's data remains the same under GDPR procedures and guidelines.

16. As per all matters pertaining to our school's Code of Behaviour, if a student acts in a fashion that is contrary to our Code's expectations, they may receive a sanction and/or Suspension/ recommendation to the Board of Management for Permanent Exclusion.

17. As far as is practicable, we recommend that teachers and students use the unexpected school closure time, for revision. This may not be feasible in all instances, and in particular for exam classes who may not have finished their courses yet; teachers may find it necessary to proceed with course work. It is expected that all students and teachers will engage as best they can with all efforts at online teaching and learning so as not to be behind when normal school resumes.

18. Parents / Guardians must inform the school if a student is not in a position to engage in the online teaching and learning.

19. Parents / Guardians are expected to monitor the students conduct and application to study throughout a school closure period.