

Acceptable Use of the Internet at Strathearn School

To all pupils and parents

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1 Introduction

As part of the school's curriculum, we offer pupils access to the Internet reflecting its increasing use in our society in general. Access to the Internet enables pupils to explore thousands of libraries, databases, and bulletin boards while exchanging messages with other Internet users throughout the world.

The Department of Education provides schools with the necessary hardware, software and connectivity to enable access to the Internet through an organisation called C2k. Access is thus controlled through a filtering mechanism controlled by C2k. However, no matter how thorough, a filtering service can never be comprehensive. It is possible for unsuitable websites to become available, sometimes for short periods after they are launched. As soon as a site is deemed to be unsuitable, it will be blocked, so that no user can subsequently access it.

Families should be aware that some material accessible via the Internet may contain items that are illegal, defamatory, inaccurate or potentially offensive.

Whilst our aim for Internet use is to further educational goals and objectives, pupils may find ways to access other materials as well. Ultimately it is the joint responsibility of school staff and the parent or guardian of each pupil to educate the pupil about her responsibility when using the Internet.

In school, teachers guide pupils towards appropriate materials. We reinforce good behaviour in this area by firm adherence to the rules set out on the last page of this document. In addition, there are routine daily checks of browsing activity by the C2k team who look for 'key' words which may indicate inappropriate browsing, for example inappropriate text strings that users have searched for in search engines

Outside of school, families bear the same responsibility for such guidance as they exercise with information sources such as television, telephones, movies, radio and other sources of potentially offensive media.

2 A Brief Guide to the Internet

What is the Internet?

The Internet is a large number of computers all over the world linked together through cables and telephone lines. In most cases, each of these computers is also linked to a number of other computers, in a local network.

It is possible for someone using one of these computers to gain access to information on any of the others. It is also possible for other people, outside these local networks, to connect to the Internet by using standard telephone lines between their computers and those already connected to the Internet. Most schools, including Strathearn, have their own website. Strathearn's website may be found at <http://www.strathearn.org.uk>.

What is Electronic Mail (Email)?

This is a way of sending messages from one person to another via the Internet. Each Strathearn pupil is given her own unique email address using their C2k username and password.

The C2k email system is protected by a filtering policy which safeguards staff and students from viruses, spam and inappropriate content. The policy is continually being evolved in response to feedback from schools and to take advantage of technological advances.

The filtering policy will automatically analyse each message according to the criteria defined below and block if appropriate.

- Image Analysis (inappropriate or unrecognised images)
- Textual Analysis (inappropriate language)
- Media/file type not recognised
- Attachments with executable programs
- Virus detected
- Spam

The message will then be treated in one of the following three ways:

Delivered:	The message is delivered
Held:	The message is held for a maximum of 4 weeks and is then deleted unless it is released by the <i>Principal</i> .
Not held or delivered:	The message is not delivered to your school's mailbox and is not available for release.

What are the dangers of the Internet referred to in the media?

It is true that there is some material on the Internet that would be offensive to most people, such as pornography, racist and fascist material, and it is possible for children to find access to this.

Electronic filter systems aim to prevent access to inappropriate material; however such technical efforts are unlikely to be completely effective.

An alternative approach is to educate our pupils and encourage acceptable use through partnership between home and school in dealing with the less savoury side of Internet use.

Messaging Services

MSN messenger, BEBO and other messaging services are very popular but are also open to abuse by adults posing as children. Although these services cannot be accessed from within school, it is possible for children to access them from other places. In order to try to protect our pupils we endeavour to educate them about the dangers of these activities. In form 1 all pupils study the dangers of the Internet and are given an Internet safety leaflet produced by Childnet International. Another leaflet, "Keeping up with children on the Internet" aimed at parents, is also given to pupils to take home. We hope you found the advice contained in that leaflet helpful. Further advice can be found on the Childnet website at www.childnet-int.org.

How can I get more information?

We will continue to strive to provide the best experiences for the pupils in this area. However, if you have any further queries, please contact the school and ask to speak to the IT co-ordinator.

3 The School Rules for Internet Use

Pupils are responsible for good behaviour on the Internet just as they are in a classroom or a school corridor. General school rules apply.

The Internet is provided for pupils to conduct research and communicate with others. Access is a privilege, not a right and access requires responsibility.

Individual users of the Internet are responsible for their behaviour and communications over the network. It is presumed that users will comply with school standards.

Staff will regularly inspect files and communications in computer storage areas to ensure that users are using the system responsibly. Users should not expect that files stored on servers or disks would always be private.

The following are not permitted:

- 1 Sending or displaying offensive messages or pictures
- 2 Using obscene language
- 3 Harassing, insulting or attacking others
- 4 Damaging computers, computer systems or computer networks
- 5 Violating copyright laws
- 6 Using others' passwords
- 7 Trespassing in others' folders, work or files
- 8 Intentionally wasting limited resources

Sanctions

- 1 Violations of the above rules will result in a temporary or permanent ban on the use of all electronic communication.
- 2 Additional sanctions may be added in line with the School Discipline Policy on inappropriate language or behaviour.
- 3 When applicable, police or local authorities may be involved.

The above examples of misconduct are not exhaustive. The Principal reserves the right to decide how any other example of misconduct will be dealt with.