



Online Communication Policy



Academic Year 2021-2022

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Online Communication Policy

Introduction:

Clarity around communications between all members of the school community is a must. This Communications Policy is designed to keep clear communication lines within the school community, with defined expectations from parents, students, and staffs using electronic communications equipment.

Electronic communication equipment's include any device which allows text, message, voice, image or video communication. Examples include telephone, , voicemail, computer, laptops, tablets, mobile or smart phones, smart watches, photocopier, digital cameras, and web cameras. Types of communication can include (but is not limited to) internet, telephone, email, text messaging, multimedia messaging, transmission of photographs and videos, contact via websites and social networking sites, blogging, contact via web cameras and internet phones, communication via tablet or smartphone Apps or any social media platforms.

Objective:

Pamir Private School's goal is to protect school parents, staff and students from harassment, arising from the use of electronic communication equipment in or outside school. It is also intended to ensure that the school's equipment is used responsibly and safely at all times.

The Internet:

1. The internet is a valuable work resource, which enriches teaching and learning. During school hours staff members are expected to restrict internet access to work related activities. Reasonable personal use may be permitted outside recorded working time (for example at break time or lunchtime).
2. Staff must not use electronic equipment for any form of illegal activity, e.g. downloading copyrighted material, introducing a virus, hacking into other computers, viewing or downloading obscene, offensive or any other inappropriate material from any source, transmitting or storing such material on a computer. Disciplinary actions proceedings may result if any equipment is used for illegal activity, regardless of whether it is personal or school owned.
3. Anyone in advertently accessing inappropriate material should immediately inform the Online Safety Officer or the designated personnel in-charge in school and ensure that the incident is recorded in the online safety incident log.

Email:

1. All work-related emails should be written using a school official email address. School email should be regarded as an official communication. Emails should be written in the same professional tone and text as any other form of official school communication.

2. Email is governed by the same rules which cover all home-school correspondence. Therefore, copies should be kept as a record of the communication e.g. by keeping a saved or printed copy, forwarding the email to the school office or other relevant staff.
3. School email accounts must not be used to send, store or circulate personal email.
4. Sending of abusive, threatening, discriminatory or other offensive email is forbidden and may be considered a criminal act. Bear in mind that emails may be submitted as evidence in legal proceedings and that email discussions with third parties can constitute a legally binding contract.
5. Email attachments should be opened with care unless you have absolute confidence in its origin as this is one of the most likely points of introducing a virus into a computer system.
6. An individual should not access the email of another individual without express permission and a clear understanding of the reason for the proxy access. However, staff should be aware that school email accounts may be accessed by the Principal or designated personnel for monitoring or management purposes.

Actions a staff and parents must take if in receipt of inappropriate emails:

1. It is impossible to control what information is sent to a member of staff or parent by email. However if offensive, obscene and/or discriminatory material is received it is then the responsibility of the receiver to report immediately, and in writing, to Online Safety Officer or to designated personnel. Never send a reply.
2. Keep a printed copy of the email as evidence and pass a copy of the email to the appropriate person for the record. Ensure that the sender's information is also recorded as their email service provider may take action.
3. Do not forward any email containing an inappropriate image of a child, even for investigation purposes. It is illegal to distribute indecent images of children, even if the image was originally created by the child themselves.

Online social communication:

1. Majority of staff and students use social media for communication outside school. Staff should not use school facilities to access or update personal social networks. Staff should be aware of the potential risk to their professional reputation and potential for safeguarding allegations caused by adding students, parents or friends of students to their social network contacts and are strongly recommended not to do so.
2. Care should be taken that comments made on a social network site, website or App do not relate to or identify the school, staff and students as this could result in disciplinary action. It is also important that photographs and descriptions of activities in the personal life of staff do not adversely affect the professional reputation of staff or the school. Staff should be aware that even if they have used the privacy settings, they may not be able to prevent material becoming public due to the risk of republishing by someone else.

3. It is recognized that online social communications tools have a potentially useful role in schools – such as on school websites, learning journals, celebrating good work, sharing information and facilitating collaboration. Where students and their families are sharing these tools with staff in school it is important that this should always be through a school based resource, such as the school Learning Platform, using a school official account where all communication is open and transparent.
4. If a member of staff keeps a personal post or blogs the content must maintain acceptable professional standards. Any inappropriate use may lead to disciplinary action in accordance with school policy. All blogs or post should contain a disclaimer that the views expressed are personal and not necessarily those of the school.
5. School is vulnerable to any materials being posted about the school. Students and all staff members must report of anything that brings the school into disrepute.

Action a parent and staff must take if there are inappropriate, threatening or malicious material online concerning the image of students and the school:

1. Secure and preserve any evidence. For example note the web address or take a screen shot or copy and print the screen
2. Report immediately to the Online Safety Officer or the designated personnel in-charge, who will check and investigate the incident.

Real time online communications:

1. The ability to communicate using voice, text or webcams in real time using the computer, tablet devices and mobile phones makes these an excellent tool for a range of educational purposes. However, staff should take the same level of care with these tools as they would be working in a face to face situation with a student or group of students. Access should always be through a school created account, never a personal account and it should be focused on a clearly specified educational objective.
2. There may be times that exchange of messages in all forms will happen outside normal school hours and off the school premises. In this situation, it should always be carried out with a degree of professionalism. Staff should be aware that they must remain focused on the educational purpose of the communication and never allow it to become a social exchange.
3. Staff should also agree to specific times for availability and only allow contact during these times, to protect their personal time. When a web camera is used it should have a clear purpose. Staff should be aware of the ability of meetings of this kind to be recorded without their knowledge. However, they may wish to use this function for their own security, as long as all parties are informed that recording is taking place.

Actions a staff and parent may take if an incident of cyber bullying occurs:

1. Report immediately and in writing to the Online Safety Officer.
2. Don't reply to abusive or worrying text or video messages.
3. Don't delete messages. Keep them for evidence.
4. Try and obtain the phone number if you can. Most calls can be traced.
5. Report it to your phone provider and/or request a change of number.
6. Technical staff may also be able to help you to find or preserve evidence e.g. logs of the call.

Personal Laptop/Tablet/Gadgets:

A **personal laptop or any gadgets** brought into the school premises by staff and students **MUST NOT** be used to undertake any activities during the school day that may hamper the school academic flow, nor should it have information stored within it which would be deemed to be unacceptable. It is recommended that a personal laptop/gadgets used at school must be registered and will be under the firewall or restriction system of the school. Additionally a personal laptop/gadgets used for any school activity must be fully protected against virus infection.

Monitoring and Privacy:

The school official email and internet facilities are secured and owned by the school. The school therefore reserves the right to monitor all use of the internet and of the school's IT systems. Usage will be monitored to ensure that the systems are being employed primarily for educational purposes, that there is no harassment or defamation taking place and that staff members and students are not entering into illegal transactions. Electronic equipment on the school site may be searched and examined.

Email, telephone calls and internal and external post (unless clearly identified as private and confidential post) should be used primarily for educational purposes. To ensure this, monitoring can be carried out on a regular basis. School Online Safety Officer and IT personnel in-charge have access to all the school communication systems for monitoring and interception of communications in order to deal with matters concerning staff and students. or other valid reasons.

Breaches and Sanctions:

Failure to follow any aspect of this policy (either deliberately or accidentally) could lead to disciplinary action against staff or students in accordance with the following policy:

- Students Discipline Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Mobile/Gadget Policy
- Distance Learning Safeguarding Policy
- eSafe Policy for Staff
- Acceptable Use Policy Agreement

Monitoring and Review:

The Senior Leadership Team will monitor and evaluate the outcomes of this policy to ensure that our staff, parents, and students are oriented and guided of Online Communication Policy. This policy will be reviewed every 6 months, or more often if necessary, due to changes in regulations or circumstances.



C O N F O R M E:

I/We understand the Online Communication Policy.

I/We accept and we will adhere to every rule about it.

Parents Name and Signature

Student Name

Class

Date