Webwise AUP Guidelines

Developing internet policy in your school

Acceptable Use Policy

Devising an Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) is an important first step in addressing the issue of Internet safety at school level. The following information provides guidelines and advice on the issues involved in this process.

Developing an Acceptable Use Policy (AUP)

An Acceptable Use Policy is a document which addresses all rights, privileges, responsibilities and sanctions associated with the Internet. It is usually drawn up by teachers and management in consultation with parents, signed by students and their parents or guardians and often incorporated into the school's overall ICT policy. Ideally, every school will devise an AUP before it is involved in any use of the Internet and will seek Board of Management endorsement (for legal reasons).

AUPs may differ from school to school depending on school circumstances, student and teacher educational needs and technical infrastructures. It may be similar in the way it refers to sanctions or legal responsibilities.

Included in this publication is a sample AUP for teachers. In general, it addresses the safe, acceptable and responsible use of many aspects of the Internet. It also deals with sanctions to be imposed if the AUP is not adhered to. It may be used as a framework or customised to reflect individual school circumstances and needs. (This publication also includes guidelines on the use of different aspects of the Internet. These can be adapted or subsumed into the AUP provided, should the school opt to include that level of detail).

As the rationale for having an AUP is primarily to promote good practice and safe, responsible use of the Internet, it is a very important document. Its main goals are:

- To educate students, parents and teachers about the potential of the Internet as a valuable learning resource
- To define the parameters of behaviour and specify the consequences of violating those parameters
- To identify the school strategy on promoting the safe use of the Internet and address the risks associated with its use
- To provide schools with legal protection from liability

Explaining to students why an AUP exists and how it operates may sound obvious, but it is still an important step in raising awareness and providing students with insights into various Internet safety issues. Whilst regulation and technical solutions are very important, their use should be balanced by educating students to take a responsible approach. The education of students is an essential part of the school's internet safety provision. Children and young people need the help and support of the school to recognise and avoid e-safety risks and build their resilience. A planned internet safety programme should be provided as part of SPHE or other curriculum areas and should be regularly revisited with key safety messages reinforced as part of a planned programme.

Components of an AUP

An AUP should address all aspects of Internet usage. These include:

- Searching
- Downloading
- Publishing a school website
- Browsing websites
- Electronic communication such as email, social networking, messaging etc.

Other issues that an AUP may include:

- Online research skills
- Where to locate Internet safety advice and guidelines

- Definition of inappropriate material
- Illegal and harmful use of the Internet
- Use of equipment for commercial gain
- Use of email accounts
- Sanctions
- Copyright guidelines
- Online games
- Reporting mechanisms

Suggested steps to follow in developing and updating this policy:

1	**Initiate and establish structures**	• Decide on who will have responsibility for putting this policy in place • Establish a co-ordinating group or committee, if considered necessary
2	**Review and Research**	• Reference the key information on the www.webwise.ie and www.education.ie websites which provide information, advice, and tools to support schools in being proactive in the area of internet safety and are designed to be adaptable to the needs of individual schools.
3	**Preparation of draft policy**	▪ Print the following template materials below: • Sample Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) – template format • Permission slip for signature by parent/guardian – appended to template • Letter to parents/guardians • AUP checklist ▪ Amend the AUP to suit the needs of the school - each school's own context will influence the approach adopted
4	**Circulation/ Consultation**	▪ Circulate the draft policy and consult with school staff, students, parents/guardians, board of management/trustees ▪ Amend the draft policy, as necessary, in light of the consultation process
5	**Ratification and Communication**	▪ Present the policy to the Board of Management for ratification ▪ Make provision for the circulation of the policy to all parents/guardians and arrange to provide it to all students, including new entrants ▪ Communicate the ratified policy to other members of the school community
6	**Implementation**	▪ Implement the provisions of the policy over a three week period initially
7	**Monitoring**	▪ Check, at regular intervals, that the policy is being implemented and identify any issues arising
8	**Review, Evaluation and Revision**	▪ Review and evaluate the impact of the policy (AUP checklist will assist this process) ▪ Review it after the first three weeks of operation and at pre-determined intervals thereafter, and revise as necessary, in light of the evaluation process, feedback from school community and other developments

Internet Safety: Acceptable Use Policy Template

School Name: _____

Address: _____

_____

The aim of this Acceptable Use Policy is to ensure that students will benefit from 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. Therefore, if the school AUP is not adhered to this privilege will be withdrawn and appropriate sanctions – as outlined in the AUP – will be imposed.

It is envisaged that school and parent representatives will revise the AUP annually. Before signing, the AUP should be read carefully to ensure that the conditions of use are accepted and understood.

This version of the AUP was created on _____ (date)

by _____
 (name of parties involved in drawing up the AUP)

School's Strategy

The school employs a number of strategies in order to maximise learning opportunities and reduce risks associated with the Internet. These strategies are as follows:

General

- Internet sessions will always be supervised by a teacher
- Filtering software and/or equivalent systems will be used in order to minimise the risk of exposure to inappropriate material
- The school will regularly monitor students' internet usage
- Students and teachers will be provided with training in the area of Internet safety
- Uploading and downloading of non-approved software will not be permitted
- Virus protection software will be used and updated on a regular basis
- The use of personal memory sticks, CD-ROMs, or other digital storage media in school, requires a teacher's permission
- Students will treat others with respect at all times and will not undertake any actions that may bring the school into disrepute

World Wide Web

- Students will not intentionally visit Internet sites that contain obscene, illegal, hateful or otherwise objectionable materials
- Students will report accidental accessing of inappropriate materials in accordance with school procedures
- Students will use the Internet for educational purposes only
- Students will not copy information into assignments and fail to acknowledge the source (plagiarism and copyright infringement)

- Students will never disclose or publicise personal information
- Downloading by students of materials or images not relevant to their studies is in direct breach of the school's acceptable use policy
- Students 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

Email

- Students will use approved class email accounts under supervision by or permission from a teacher
- Students will not send or receive any material that is illegal, obscene, defamatory or that is intended to annoy or intimidate another person
- Students will not reveal their own or other people's personal details, such as addresses or telephone numbers or pictures
- Students will never arrange a face-to-face meeting with someone they only know through emails or the internet
- Students will note that sending and receiving email attachments is subject to permission from their teacher

Communications

This is an area of rapidly evolving technologies and uses. Schools will need to discuss and agree how they intend to implement and use new and old technologies. For example, some schools do not allow students to use mobile phones in lessons, while others recognise their educational potential and allow their use. This section may also be influenced by the age of the students. The table has been left blank for your school to choose its own responses.

A wide range of rapidly developing communications technologies has the potential to enhance learning. The following table shows how the school currently considers the benefit and risks/disadvantages of using these technologies for education:

Communication Technologies	Allowed	Allowed at certain times	Allowed with staff permission	Not allowed
Mobile phones may be brought to school				
Use of mobile phones in lessons				
Use of mobile phones in social time				
Taking photos on mobile phones or other camera devices				
Use of hand held devices eg PDAs, PSPs				
Use of personal email addresses in school, or on school network				
Use of school email for personal emails				
Use of chat rooms / facilities				
Use of instant messaging				
Use of social networking sites				
Use of blogs				

The school may also wish to add some policy statements about the use of communications technologies in place of, or in addition to the above table.

Inappropriate Activities

The following table should help identify "inappropriate activities" in your school. You should add ticks to the relevant columns and then include the appropriate statements in the AUP policy.

User Actions

		Acceptable	Acceptable at certain times	Acceptable for nominated users	Unacceptable	Unacceptable and illegal
Users shall not visit Internet sites, make, post, download, upload, data transfer, communicate or pass on, material, remarks, proposals or comments that contain or relate to:	**child sexual abuse images**					☐
	promotion or conduct of illegal acts, eg under the child protection, obscenity, computer misuse and fraud legislation					☐
	racist material					☐
	pornography				☐	
	promotion of any kind of discrimination				☐	
	promotion of racial or religious hatred				☐	
	threatening behaviour, including promotion of physical violence or mental harm				☐	
	any other information which may be offensive to colleagues or breaches the integrity of the ethos of the school or brings the school into disrepute				☐	
				☐		
Using school systems to run a private business					☐	
Use systems, applications, websites or other mechanisms that bypass the filtering or other safeguards employed by SWGfL and / or the school					☐	
Uploading, downloading or transmitting commercial software or any copyrighted materials belonging to third parties, without the necessary licensing permissions					☐	
Revealing or publicising confidential or proprietary information (eg financial / personal information, databases, computer / network access codes and passwords)					☐	
Creating or propagating computer viruses or other harmful files						
Carrying out sustained or instantaneous high volume network traffic (downloading / uploading files) that causes network congestion and hinders others in their use of the internet						
On-line gaming						
On-line gambling						
On-line shopping / commerce						
File sharing						
Use of social networking sites						

School Website

- Students will be given the opportunity to publish projects, artwork or school work on the World Wide Web in accordance with clear policies and approval processes regarding the content that can be loaded to the school's website
- The website will be regularly checked to ensure that there is no content that compromises the safety of students or staff
- Website using facilities such as comments and user-generated content will be checked frequently to ensure that they do not contain personal details
- The publication of student work will be co-ordinated by a teacher
- The school will endeavor to use digital photographs, audio or video clips focusing on group activities. Content focusing on individual students will only be published on the school website with parental permission
- Personal student information including home address and contact details will be omitted from school web pages
- The school website will avoid publishing the first name and last name of individuals in a photograph
- The school will ensure that the image files are appropriately named and will not use students' names in image file names or ALT tags if published on the web
- Students will continue to own the copyright on any work published

Personal Devices

Students using their own technology in school should follow the rules set out in this agreement. They will only use personal hand held / external devices (mobile phones / USB devices etc) in school if they have permission.

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 1988

Support Structures

The school will inform students and parents of key support structures and organisations that deal with illegal material or harmful use of the Internet.

Sanctions

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

Permission Form Template

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

School Name: _____

Name of Student: _____

Class/Year: _____

Student

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: _____   **Date:**

Parent/Guardian

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.

I accept the above paragraph □   I do not accept the above paragraph □
(Please tick as appropriate)

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

I accept the above paragraph □   I do not accept the above paragraph □
(Please tick as appropriate)

Signature: _____   **Date:** _____

Address: _____   **Telephone:** _____

          _____

          _____

          _____

Sample Letter to Parents/Guardians

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Re: Internet Permission Form

As part of the school's education programme we offer pupils supervised access to the Internet. This allows students access to a large array of online educational resources that we believe can greatly enhance the learning experience.

However, access to and use of the Internet requires responsibility on the part of the user and the school. These responsibilities are outlined in the school's Acceptable Use Policy (enclosed). It is important that this enclosed document is read carefully, signed by a parent or guardian and returned to the school.

Although the school takes active steps to promote safe use of the Internet, it recognises the possibility that students may accidentally or deliberately access inappropriate or objectionable material.

The school respects each family's right to decide whether or not to allow their children access to the Internet as defined by the school's Acceptable Use Policy.

Having read the terms of our school's Acceptable Use Policy, you may like to take a moment to consider how the Internet is used in your own home, and see if there is any way you could make it safer for your own family.

Yours sincerely,

AUP checklist

For an AUP to be robust it needs to be reviewed and updated regularly taking into consideration implementation issues that may arise. The following is a checklist that may be used when developing or revising an AUP.

☐ Have AUP implementation issues arisen since the AUP was designed/revised?

☐ Have these issues been discussed with parents, students and teachers and incorporated into an updated AUP?

☐ Given that an AUP is in place, can the school confidently address the following scenarios?

    ☐ A student is found using a chat room to arrange a face-to-face meeting with a friend

    ☐ The school uses filtering software but a student accidentally accesses a pornographic website while in your care

    ☐ A student publishes defamatory information on a personal website about a peer

☐ Has the AUP had a positive impact on curriculum delivery?

☐ Has internal or external expertise assisted the formulation or reformulation of the AUP?

☐ Has the AUP as a code of Internet use transferred to home use?

☐ Does an open dialogue exist between students and teachers relating to Internet misuse and safety issues?

☐ Are teachers' and students' internet safety training needs being met?