

Electronic Mail – Acceptable Use Policy

1 Introduction

1.1 The School makes extensive use of electronic mail (e-mail) both within the organisation and with external organisations using the Internet e-mail system.

1.2 The facilities to provide this service represent a considerable commitment of Council resources in respect of telecommunications, networking, security, software and support as well as significant costs. They also represent a significant risk if they are not used correctly.

1.3 This document is intended to define in a clear and straightforward manner what those risks are and the conditions under which the School's e-mail systems might be used.

2 Scope

2.1 This policy applies to all employees and pupils of Medina House School.

2.2 The policy applies equally to basic e-mail messages and to any attachments sent with messages.

2.3 The School has a separate 'Internet / Intranet – Acceptable Use Policy' which covers the more general use of these services.

3 Policy Updates

3.1 This policy will be amended from time to time in response to changing circumstances as e-mail facilities develop and in response to operational and legislative requirements.

3.2 As a condition of use, it is the responsibility of users to ensure that they keep up-to-date with the latest requirements of the policy.

4 User Awareness

4.1 All Internet users will be required to sign the following statement before being allowed access to the Internet:

I have read the School's Electronic Mail Acceptable Use Policy and fully understand the terms and conditions and agree to abide by them.

I understand that the School's security systems will record for management use all e-mail activity undertaken by me including any material transmitted or received.

I understand that violation of this policy may lead to disciplinary action and could also lead to personal criminal prosecution.

5 Provision of Service

5.1 The School will provide e-mail services to all staff who have signed the User Awareness statement.

5.2 The School does however reserve the right to withdraw this facility at the request of service managers and in the event that the facility becomes uneconomic or is being abused.

6 The use of E-Mail

6.1 E-mail users are responsible for the content of all text, audio and images that they send over the School's e-mail systems. The natures of the systems do however lend themselves to informal working practices and this can be dangerous.

6.2 As e-mail messages may have to be disclosed in litigation, it is always good practice for users to ask themselves before sending an e-mail message how they would feel if it was read out in court.

6.3 An e-mail message is, for legal purposes, treated as a publication and is therefore subject to all the normal legal restrictions on publication.

6.4 Data within e-mail is predominantly personal data and as such is subject to the provisions of Data Protection legislation. Users must ensure that they understand and comply with these requirements.

6.5 Users using the e-mail system to access Internet newsgroups and other Internet services must ensure that they comply fully with the requirements of the School's Internet / Intranet Acceptable Use Policy.

6.6 The printing of e-mail messages is largely unnecessary although it may not feel so initially. Users should consider developing the habit of dealing with all correspondence electronically, including online filing of any messages they wish to retain.

7 Good Practice

7.1 The informal nature of e-mail means that it is easy to cause offence. Users should:

7.1.1 Take care that the tone of the message is clear – irony and humour for example may not be clear to the recipient unless it is someone who is known well.

7.1.2 Ensure that the tone of a message is respectful to recipients, regardless of their role and status.

7.1.3 Ensure particular care is taken with remarks that are, or might appear to be, critical of the recipient or another person – these can come across as much stronger than intended and might, in some instances, be considered defamatory.

7.1.4 Ensure that the originator of a message has no objection to it being forwarded before passing it on to a third party.

8 Personal Use of E-Mail

8.1 The School's e-mail facility is intended to support the legitimate educational and business requirements and in principle any other use is not permitted.

8.2 The systems are not used for private business or other commercial purposes.

8.3 The following statement is included in every personal message sent:

This e-mail is the personal responsibility of the sender and is not authorised by or sent on behalf of the Headteacher of Medina House School.

8.4 The easiest way to include a statement about personal responsibility in an e-mail message is to include the text as a part of a digital signature.

9 Prohibited Uses

9.1 The School's e-mail services service may not be used for the transmitting, retrieving or storing of any messages or attachments which are:

9.1.1 Harassing – harassment is unwanted conduct (including insults and 'jokes') which relates to gender, race, sexual orientation, religion, disability or other similar issues.

9.1.2 Defamatory – defamation is the publication of material which adversely affects the reputation of a person or school.

9.1.3 Copyright – copyright means that the owner of such material has the exclusive right to determine how that material might be copied and used. Copyright material may not be transmitted if the owner's permission has not been obtained.

9.1.4 Obscene – obscene means material of an offensive of sexual nature.

9.1.5 Offensive – offensive means any material which might reasonably be expected to cause distress to the recipient.

9.2 Users must not send e-mail or other electronic communications which hide the identity of the sender or which represent the sender as someone else. In addition to being contrary to this policy, such action is contrary to the requirements of the Computer Misuse Act 1990 and may render the user liable to prosecution.

9.3 Users must not install additional e-mail related software on School systems, or change the configuration of existing software, without the written authorisation of the Manager for ICT and Headteacher.

9.4 Users must not disclose their passwords to others or permit others to use their e-mail accounts.

10 Monitoring

10.1 Users should not expect e-mails and the contents of files to be private. E-mail messages constitute records of the School and as such may be stored and accessed at any time without notice to ensure that users are complying with the requirements of this policy and that no misuse is taking place.

11 Confidentiality

11.1 The School does not monitor or read users e-mail as a matter of course. However if a possible misuse is reported, or if there is reason to suspect any use of e-mail (including personal e-mail) which contravenes this policy, the School reserved the right to examine mail messages without authorisation from or notification to the sender and the recipient.

11.2 In general terms, confidential information includes any information which is not available to the public. Information which is highly confidential is that which would damage the interests of the School and those it serves.

11.3 The nature of e-mail, and in particular Internet e-mail, is such that users should never assume the privacy or confidentiality of messages. Confidential and highly confidential material should therefore never be sent by e-mail.

12 Untoward Incidents

12.1 Users who receive e-mail which they regard as being offensive, potentially illegal or which otherwise appears to contravene acceptable School policy or statutory requirements should be reported immediately to the Headteacher.

13 Breach of Policy

13.1 This Acceptable Use Policy has been drafted in such a way as to protect both the School and users and any breach of policy will be dealt with in accordance with the School's general disciplinary procedures.

13.2 For the avoidance of doubt, failure to adhere to this policy will be considered to be a potentially serious disciplinary offence which could lead to dismissal. Breach of the policy could also lead to criminal or civil action if illegal material is involved or legislation is contravened and the School will not hesitate to bring to the attention of the appropriate authorities any use of its systems by users which it believes might be illegal.



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Signed

Date

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