



St. Joseph's College Distance Learning Policy

Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines and information to students, their parents, 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 unforeseen school closure.

This policy does not set out to replace our Acceptable Usage Policies or Internet User 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 Policy and Anti-Bullying (including Cyber Bullying) Policy which can be viewed on the school website.

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 and relevant sections of:

- (a) The Education Act (1998)
- (b) Education (Welfare) Act (2000)
- (c) Equal Status Act (2000)
- (d) Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004)
- (e) Disability Act (2005)
- (f) Children First 2017
- (g) GDPR
- (h) Department of Education: Child Protection Procedures for Primary and PostPrimary schools
- (i) 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 in response to the Covid-19 Pandemic, and reflects the changed circumstances brought about by Covid and the significant increase in the use of technology to continue teaching and learning. This policy does not introduce any new concepts, rather, it specifically outlines the various applications used for the delivery of online classes remotely.

Garbally College endeavours to make it very clear to all of our partners that the values that are instilled in all of our policies remain, no matter how we change our teaching and learning methodologies or the location of that teaching and learning. This includes remote learning/distance Learning or when a child is being taught in an environment that is not within the school building and the teacher is working remotely and is not present with the student(s).

Scope of this Policy

This policy covers any aspect of student distance learning as used by Garbally College Staff.

In all cases students must use their @garbally.ie account to log in. Students are not to use any other account under any circumstances for the purposes of Distance Learning within the College.

The list of applications that will be used for distance learning will primarily be:

- Office365, incorporating:
 - Microsoft Outlook (e-mail)
 - Microsoft Teams
 - Microsoft OneNote
 - Microsoft Forms
 - Microsoft Stream

There may be some additional applications that teachers may use, and teacher/s will provide the student with the information required to access them. In all cases, students must use an @garbally.ie account as the login.

Guidelines on the appropriate use of Online Platforms for engaging in Remote/Distance teaching and learning

The primary online platform our school is currently using is Microsoft Teams.

Teachers may choose to conduct live, asynchronous, and or recorded classes on Microsoft Teams.

Teachers will assign work to class groups according to an agreed timetable.

Teachers will Feedback to students (individual/small groups) using either email, chat, feedback in assignments, video or telephone conferencing: whichever deemed appropriate.

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.

Teachers will do their utmost to be available at the identified time on their timetable – this may be via a Teams online lesson, chat or by e-mail and within school time.

Parents and students need to be aware that teachers may have to send material/ assignments outside of regular school opening hours. Where possible all communication will take place within the school day.

No matter what time a student and/ or teacher is on Teams i.e. whether the teacher is online giving a tutorial or not- the moment a student logs onto Teams they must abide by the school rules and the rules will be implemented if and when necessary. Students cannot choose to leave a Team once a teacher has created one.

A Teams meeting link is intended for the student only. The teacher will decide who should receive the link and it not permitted to forward any link to anyone else.

Teachers have overall control of the online interaction of their class.

Disruptive students will be removed in order to allow those who wish to partake, a fair chance to do so. Repeatedly disruptive students may receive a temporary ban from all online access following correct adherence to the code of behaviour.

For students:

As in the traditional classrooms, there are rules and expectations (Netiquette- On-Line Etiquette) in the virtual classroom and school. When students log on to Microsoft TEAMS platform, they should:

- Have a profile picture that does not contain any slogans/logos/images that may cause upset or be deemed offensive to any member of the school community. Comedic profile pictures are also distracting and should not be used.
- Be on time and enter your virtual classroom with your camera off and microphone muted until your teacher instructs you/invites you to do otherwise. In any case, all microphones should be on mute when a person is not speaking to avoid distracting background noise being broadcast to everyone.
- Dress appropriately.

Be respectful of both your teacher/s and peers in your interactions, raise your hand for permission to speak. Use appropriate language in the chat function.

- Not use emojis inappropriately.
- Do not interfere with the proceeding/settings/features of your virtual class on TEAMS.
- Follow the direction of their teacher, just as in the classroom.
- Complete all assignments given by your teachers.
- Not take photographs/screenshots/audio and or visual recordings at any time without the consent of their teacher.
- Not record or forward any content within a Teams group – such as worksheets, exam papers, answers, solutions, videos or notes – to anyone else without the permission of the creator of that content and/or teacher/s
- Not create other TEAMS within a Team or on TEAMS itself.

Remember all your online activity is recorded. This includes anything you send or publish via e-mail, Teams and OneNote. A record of your engagement and completion of assignments is also recorded.

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.

- A teacher will only correspond and engage with a student who is using and is logged into their @garbally.ie account.
- 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.
- Any language directed towards a fellow student or teacher that is aggressive/ threatening or offensive will warrant a serious sanction up to and including expulsion.
- The criteria for mandated Child Protection reporting remains the same as if the child was being taught in school.
- All provisions relating to the child's data remains the same under GDPR procedures and guidelines.
- 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.

Parents and Guardians can contribute to successful Distance eLearning/Remote Teaching:

- By ensuring that your son is following his class timetable and completing all assignments. By ensuring that your son has an area of the house that is quiet and free from distraction to allow full engagement with online teaching and learning. Please be mindful of Child Protection guidelines.
- It is recommended that Live online classes should be attended/viewed by your son only.

Approved by the Board of Management on the 12/01/2021 and will be reviewed in January 2023.

Colm Allman