

# The St Michael Steiner School

## Policy for the Use of Electronic Media

Red indicates changes made at the last review

### Aims of this policy

This policy is supplementary to our *Safeguarding and Child Protection policy and procedure*, and our *Health and Safety policy*, and provides information about the measures we have put in place to protect our children from the dangers of internet use.

Our separate *E-safety Curriculum policy* describes how we guide our pupils in the safer use of the internet in age-appropriate ways.

### Steiner Waldorf Education

Steiner Waldorf Education develops children's capacities for imagination, healthy feeling, independent thinking, and an active will. It is now widely recognised that electronic media, including video games, tablets, smartphones, computers, television and movies can have a debilitating effect on the development of these capacities.

### The young child

We understand that electronic media are a significant part of people's daily lives. However, it cannot be overstated how important it is that young children<sup>1</sup> are not exposed to electronic media of any kind. We can offer advice to parents about how to implement the changes necessary to achieve this.

### Older children and students

While we must bear in mind that exposure to and use of electronic media *always* has an effect on the capacities mentioned above, even in adults, we recognise and value the fact that information technology, for entertainment, research and communication, is available to everyone, and that older children will use it.

However, we should be aware that the internet is an unmanaged, open communications channel. Most of the content is published for an adult audience and most is unsuitable for children.

Internet content changes rapidly and many parents do not keep up with the changes, do not monitor their older children's online activity or the effect it has on them, and are only vaguely aware of what they are exposed to.

### Use of electronic media at school

- Staff use digital media in the High School, and sometimes in the Middle School, to show videos and listen to podcasts as part of lessons.
- Staff and older students use digital media at school to record their work, for example, processes in craft or other projects, presentations and oral assessments.
- Students in the High School use their own laptops for research and writing in lessons and have access to the internet via the student wifi during lesson time, but not at break times. They have their own password, unsuitable sites are blocked and usage is

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<sup>1</sup> In this context, 'young children' means children under 9.

monitored. They are advised about e-safety and internet use in lessons is monitored by staff. (See the *High School Students' Handbook*)

- It should be noted that, while we take all reasonable precautions to ensure that students, staff and visitors do not access inappropriate material either deliberately or inadvertently, it is not possible to guarantee that unsuitable material will never appear on a screen at school.

## Filtering and Monitoring

- The school's filtering and monitoring system blocks unsuitable websites and monitors all internet use across the school.
- The system is managed by a designated College member<sup>2</sup> and reviewed annually to ensure that it is adequate.
- The designated College member makes random checks of internet use or at the request of staff.

## Use of Electronic media outside school

The school does not take responsibility for pupils' use of electronic media outside school; this is the responsibility of parents and the pupils themselves.

Guidance in making good use of the internet, and about possible dangers, is given at school, so that pupils are informed, and can respond in an appropriate way to any issues that may arise.

## Examples of e-safety issues include:

- Many teenagers use online gaming excessively and this leads to exhaustion, inability to sleep and to think clearly, lack of concentration and, as a result, frequent absence from school and illness.<sup>3</sup>
- Social networking simulates true human connection and builds a false social context that can replace real social interaction and leave children isolated.
- Exposure to inappropriate material<sup>4</sup>, such as pornography, violence, 'hate' and lifestyle websites (e.g. sites which promote self harm)
- Bullying via texts and social networks
- Unknowingly making contact with predatory people via chat rooms, gaming and social networking sites and becoming vulnerable to sexting or grooming.

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<sup>2</sup> In 2025/2026, the person monitoring the system is Sarah Houghton

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.helpguide.org/mental/internet\\_cybersex\\_addiction.htm](http://www.helpguide.org/mental/internet_cybersex_addiction.htm), and <https://www.netaddictionrecovery.com/the-problem/signs-and-symptoms.html> These internet sites describe some of the symptoms of internet addiction: feeling more comfortable with your online friends than your real ones, inability to control behaviour, losing track of time, restlessness, depression, feeling a sense of euphoria when engaged in internet activities, isolation from family and friends, difficulty sleeping.

<sup>4</sup> A particular concern currently is the increasing prevalence of child sexual abuse material (CSAM) These images are commonplace and can be found on mainstream social media and online gaming platforms. In 2021 there were 85 million pictures and videos depicting child sexual abuse reported worldwide, many more will have gone unreported. Due to the COVID 19 pandemic, children are spending more time in the digital world than ever before. A recent report from the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) found a 64% increase in reported webpages containing confirmed child sexual abuse images in 2021 compared to 2020. Almost seven in 10 instances involved children aged 11 - 13 years. The same report showed that 97% of the images removed were of girls. **Resource:** Inhope - organisation fighting CSAM: <https://www.inhope.org/EN>

- Identity theft and image manipulation<sup>5</sup>
- Copyright issues (e.g. through illegally downloading music, images or films)

## Guidance for Parents

1. We provide information to parents, so that they are aware of the dangers and to equip them with tools to guard their children against exposure to the damaging effects of these media. This e-Safety guidance is available on the school website and parents' attention is drawn to it from time to time via the Parents' Handbook, the school newsletter and parents' evenings.
2. Articles<sup>6</sup> on our Facebook page and website address the issues that arise from children's use of electronic media.
3. We discourage parents from giving their children smartphones and give guidance about where to buy phones that do not have internet access<sup>7</sup>.
4. We strongly recommend that parental guidance and careful vigilance be exercised in monitoring older children's activity on the Internet and these issues are discussed regularly at parents' meetings. We also advise parents to discuss them with their children's teachers and with other parents.
5. Parents are encouraged to support the school in promoting good online safety practice and to support their children in following school policies.
6. Class teachers see the children of their class daily and for many years. If the Class Teacher feels that frequent access to the Internet is affecting a child in their class, then they will contact the parents to address this.
7. Although we offer the above guidance to parents, we cannot enforce it. Therefore we must assume that even some of the youngest children in the school will be exposed to, or have access to, digital media and the internet, and provide them with appropriate support. (*See E-Safety Curriculum Policy*)

## Rules and Guidelines for Pupils

1. Pupils in the Kindergarten, Lower and Middle school are not allowed to use smartphones and other media with internet access, including smart watches at school at all.
2. All pupils must hand in their mobile phones and other media with internet access, (apart from laptops in the High School) when they arrive at school each day. They can be collected at the end of the day.
3. **Classes 11 and 12 may take their phones at break time if they are going off site and must hand them in when they return.**
4. Children in the Middle School (Classes 6, 7 & 8) sometimes use school computers under supervision but are not allowed to use their own laptops, tablets or smartphones at school.
5. Mobile phones will not usually be allowed on school trips.

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<sup>5</sup> It is happening increasingly that images of young people are manipulated using AI and used in blackmail and bullying.

<sup>6</sup> For example, those from the 'Wait until 8th' campaign. <https://www.waituntil8th.org>

<sup>7</sup> <https://turbofuture.com/cell-phones/flip-phones>

6. Students in the High School are expected to bring and use their own laptops or tablets for research and writing in lessons and have access to the internet via the school wifi during lessons but not at break times.
7. High School students may use digital media at school during lessons to record their work, for example, processes in craft or other projects, presentations and oral assessments.
8. High School students may be allowed to use smartphones to record process and finished work for assessment in art and craft lessons, if necessary. This usage is supervised by staff.

## **Guidelines for staff**

### **General**

1. The terms of the school's employment contracts prohibit the inappropriate use of the internet on school premises by any member of staff.
2. Staff should not use mobile phones in areas of the school premises accessible to children except to check the time when on break or gate duty, or to call someone in an emergency.
3. It is preferable that High School art and craft teachers photograph students' work themselves.
4. Classes 11 and 12 may take their phones at break time if they are going off site and must hand them in when they return.
5. Students should have the Student wifi password. Staff should not give other school wifi passwords to students.
6. Staff may not be 'friends' with pupils on any social networking site or send or receive messages to/from any student privately using electronic media.
7. On our annual Consent Form we ask for parental consent to take photographs and recordings of individual children participating in school activities for use in online or printed publicity materials. Consent forms should be checked before images are made public. They are available on Engage or from the receptionist.
8. If photographs or recordings are made containing children for whom consent has not been given, including children who are in the school temporarily, these must be deleted, or the images of these children obscured, immediately.
9. Photographs or recordings made at school must not be posted on any social media except on the school's website or Facebook page by the Administrators of those media.
10. Parents and visitors should not be allowed to take photographs of children except when given explicit permission in controlled situations.
11. As a general rule, emerging technologies not mentioned specifically in this guidance should not be allowed at school until their usefulness/safety has been assessed.

### **Early Years**

Guidance for Early Years staff is more restrictive because they are required to help children in toilets or to change their clothes.

1. In the Early Years, staff mobile phones should be turned off and not be carried around, except for off-site activities.
2. Kindergarten staff and volunteers must not take cameras or phones into toilets when helping children.

## High School

1. High School staff must monitor students' internet use at school and may confiscate hardware if this privilege is abused through inappropriate or excessive use.
2. High School staff must use their school email accounts when sending and receiving work from students electronically. The Email Administrator has access to all school email accounts.
3. High School staff may communicate with students via group text, WhatsApp group or email when necessary, e.g. on trips, or when they have questions about homework or assessments, etc.

## Managing the changing online world

- Emerging technologies will be examined for educational benefit and a risk assessment carried out before use in school is allowed.
- Staff, particularly those of the Middle and High School, will keep abreast of developments in gaming, social networking and any other forms of interactive electronic communication in order to monitor them and address with parents and students any issues that may arise.

## Electronically-held personal data

In accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018, we ensure that personal information held electronically is:

- held and used with the subject's knowledge and permission
- held and used for specifically stated purposes only
- kept for no longer than is necessary (*See Data Retention Policy*)
- handled according to people's data protection rights
- kept safe and secure
- shared with or transferred to other bodies in accordance with the school's Data Protection Policy.

## Handling e-safety incidents

Safeguarding issues arising from internet use will be dealt with by the designated Safeguarding officers using their usual procedures. (*See Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy*)

Pupils should be made aware that, if they have a bad experience on the internet, they can talk to either their Class Teacher, the Designated Safeguarding Lead or a deputy (*See Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy*)

## Useful links:

- NSPCC guidance for parents: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/>
- UK Safer Internet Centre: <https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/parents-and-carers>
- Anti-Phishing Working Group <https://apwg.org/>
- SWGfL - Safety and Security online: <https://swgfl.org.uk>
- Whisper anonymous reporting tool: <https://swgfl.org.uk/products/whisper/>
- So You Got Naked Online - Advice and strategies to support the issues resulting from sexting: <https://swgfl.org.uk/resources/so-you-got-naked-online/>
- Childnet - online safety for children: <https://www.childnet.com>
- Internet Watch Foundation - exists to find and remove CSAM from the internet - <https://www.iwf.org.uk>
- Inhope - organisation fighting CSAM: <https://www.inhope.org/EN>

*Policies and guidance documents are available on the school's website*

Next review date July 2026