



DEENWAY MONTESSORI SCHOOL  
& UNICITY COLLEGE  
DEO VOLENTE VINCIT QUI SE VINCIT

# Online Safety Policy

inclusive of Guidance on Mobile Technologies, Social  
Media and Entertainment Media

Approved by: Headteacher (Munawar Karim) Date: 29<sup>th</sup> September 2021

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## 1. Aims

This policy aims to:

- i. set out expectations for all school community members' online behaviour, attitudes and activities and use of digital technology
- ii. outline the school's principles and guidance on pupils' use of the internet, mobile technologies, social media and entertainment media, towards a clear shared understanding for all staff, parents and students.
- iii. provide an overview of the school's principles and guidelines for managing online safety
- iv. help the school ensure that it meets statutory obligations so that children and young people in the school community are safe and are protected from potential harm, both within and outside school.
- v. help school staff to understand their roles and responsibilities to work safely and responsibly with technology and the online world:
  - for the protection and benefit of the children and young people in their care, and
  - for their own protection, and to better understand their own standards and practice
  - for the benefit of the school, supporting the school ethos, aims and objectives, and protecting the reputation of the school and profession
- vi. help all stakeholders, particularly parents and carers, to recognise that online/digital behaviour use and standards must be upheld beyond the confines of the school gates and school day, and regardless of device or platform

## 2. General principles

- i. At the Deenway Montessori School, we believe that children flourish best when their personal, social and emotional needs are met and when they are safeguarded and protected from all manner of harm.
- ii. Protecting children's *fitra* (innate state or natural disposition) as it manifests through each individual's different stages of development is of the highest priority for us and a cornerstone in the ethos of the school. Additionally, the cultivation of noble character in children and adults of the school community is the primary mission of the school and is outlined in more detail in the school's Behaviour Policy.
- iii. As a Montessori school, we believe that children's development in the primary stages of their education is better served through didactic material that does not rely on a screen and through encouraging physical movement and sensory activities. For older children, the school envisions a learning environment and a cultural and social life of diverse activity and energy most suitable for their stage of growth, and we guide them towards healthy lifestyle choices and informed use of digital technologies.
- iv. In working towards the visions outlined in points *i*, *ii* and *iii*, we strive to cultivate a school environment where students are free from direct or indirect exposure to damaging content online, or through entertainment media, which may be detrimental to their development or leave them vulnerable to various degrees of harm.
- v. We are committed to concretely developing in our students the critical skills, intelligence and resilience needed to productively navigate a digital world. We believe that this is best done in a safe and controlled way through different opportunities in the school curriculum, and we support pupils in becoming confident and safe users of technology to achieve their objectives.
- vi. Bearing the above principles in mind, we strongly advise parents who enrol their children into the school to rigorously evaluate, as much as possible, their children's access to:
  - mobile technologies such as smart phones and tablets
  - unsupervised use of the internet

- social media, such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat or other
  - entertainment media, such as video games, entertainment films and programmes, increasingly accessible online through YouTube, Netflix or other such platforms, which may not be appropriate or harmful for children
- vii. In light of scholarly advice, we believe that where digital technologies are to be used, their use must be governed by knowledge, intelligence and a critical eye. This so that we can use these technologies in the best way, be in complete control of them and avoid any harm that their use may entail, since making light of a small part of harm leads to a great amount of harm. Given that children, as they move through the stages of childhood and adolescence, may not yet be in a position to securely do this, it is upon their parents, carers and teachers to put some restriction upon use of these devices, so that children gradually learn to apply the principle of taking that which is of benefit and leaving that which is not.
- viii. Whilst the school does not mandate parents' lifestyle choices for their children outside of school premises, we require prospective and current parents and students to understand that:
- the school's ethos rests heavily upon these principles
  - the benefit that all children will garner from being a part of the school community, participating in the school curriculum and in school activities, depends upon the whole school community keeping to these principles
  - consistency and good relationships between the school and the student's home life is vital for a positive educational experience
- ix. We keep ourselves up-to-date with legislation, research and thinking on the opportunities, risks and impact of children's online life on their development, health and well-being, and intend to compile some of these into a list of resources to share in educational events with the parent community in future.
- x. In keeping with the **statutory guidance outlined in Keeping Children Safe in Education (2021)**, **statutory guidance on PSHE as outlined in the Independent School Standards (2019)** and **statutory guidance on Relationships and Sex Education (RSE, 2020)** and the school's own aims outlined in point v above, we teach online safety to all students as appropriate for their age through the curriculum and through assemblies, visits or visiting speakers. This teaching includes equipping children to recognise and respond to cyber-bullying and other situations where they may be vulnerable or at risk online.
- xi. The Education and Inspections Act 2006 empowers Headteachers to such extent as is reasonable, to regulate the behaviour of students when they are off the school site and empowers members of staff to impose disciplinary penalties for inappropriate behaviour. This is relevant to incidents of online-bullying or other online safety incidents, which may take place outside of school but are linked to membership of the school. The school will deal with such incidents within this policy and the linked anti-bullying and behaviour policies and, where known, will inform parents of incidents of inappropriate online safety behaviour that take place outside of school.

### 3. Online safety: key issues

- i. The purported educational opportunities available to children and young people through the internet and increasingly through use of social media have become well-known and popularised. In light of this, it is of critical importance to highlight to staff, parents and students the high probability that, for children, being online is linked to being exposed to risk and harm. There is a vast range of issues classified within online safety, but these may be categorised into the following areas of risk:
- **content:** being exposed to illegal, age-inappropriate or harmful material; for example pornography, violent content, fake news, racist, Islamophobic or radical and extremist views;
  - **contact:** being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users; for example adults posing as children or young adults; communication with other inappropriate people; peer-to-peer pressure

- **conduct:** personal online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm; for example oversharing personal information, making, sending and receiving explicit images, or cyber-bullying.
  - **commercial:** the risk of being exposed to advertising, hidden costs in games, lack of awareness of companies collecting data on children’s online activity, pressure to spend money online
  - **impact on well-being:** the physiological impact of screen-time during crucial developmental years; impact of screen-contact on the quality of children’s sleep; concerns about the potential negative impacts of social media, including self-harm and eating disorder content on children’s mental health, and links between time spent on social media and anxiety and decreased well-being amongst children.
- ii. The school’s Safeguarding and Child Protection policy fully integrates online issues and ensures that concerns of abuse or disclosures that take place online are incorporated into our reporting procedures. The school’s Anti-Bullying Policy also deals with issues of cyber-bullying.
- iii. Filters:
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (2021) obliges schools to “ensure appropriate filters and appropriate monitoring systems are in place [and] not be able to access harmful or inappropriate material [but at the same time] be careful that “over blocking” does not lead to unreasonable restrictions as to what children can be taught with regards to online teaching and safeguarding.”
  - At school, devices accessible to pupils use a dedicated and secure server that is protected with firewalls and multiple layers of security, including a web filtering system.
  - On the occasion that activities in the senior school requires pupils whilst in school to use devices for web access, this is always facilitated through restricted web access and pro-active technology filtering services on the devices used. The school has invested in special software for this purpose.
  - On all school devices, internet access is filtered for all users according to a progressive filtering system that blocks sites which fall into sensitive categories and ensures age appropriate access to resources based on educational needs. Content lists are regularly updated and internet use is logged and regularly monitored. A log of all changes to filtering systems is kept. Any amendments are made in consultation with the Headteacher and other members of staff as appropriate.
  - Internet filtering/monitoring at school ensures that children are safe from all manner of harmful content, including terrorist and extremist material, when accessing the internet.
  - The school strongly advises parents to ensure that devices in their homes are set up with appropriate filters as above to ensure consistency for pupils’ in terms of what they are exposed to and used to accessing.

#### 4. Online safety in the curriculum

- i. The education of pupils in online safety and digital literacy is an important part of the school’s online safety provision. Children and young people need the help and support of the school to recognise and avoid online safety risks and build their resilience. We thus provide controlled and supervised opportunities for students to learn how to use technology in a way that could safely and usefully enhance their exploration of and connection to the world as they build their understanding of it, and train them in protecting themselves and others in its use.
- ii. Safety is a focus in all areas of the curriculum and staff regularly reinforce the school’s ethos and specific principles vis-à-vis use of the internet, social and entertainment media, and online safety messages to their students across the curriculum. It is the role of all staff to identify opportunities to thread online safety through school activities, both outside the classroom and where appropriate within the curriculum, making the most of unexpected learning opportunities as they arise (which have a unique value for pupils).

- iii. Key online safety messages are reinforced as part of a programme of assemblies and other pastoral activities. These lessons (delivered age-appropriately) altogether include teaching children and young people:
  - impact of online activities on children’s wellbeing
  - options of healthy active lifestyles with minimal screen time
  - to think about their online reputation and digital footprint
  - the rights and responsibilities online
  - how to recognise risks online and get support
  - the risks of sharing personal data and the loss of privacy
  - the risks of sharing images of themselves and how images can be manipulated
  - the risks associated with providing information with images that reveals the identity of others and their location
  - how to safeguard against vulnerability online and against online relationships
  - how to be critically aware of the materials/content they access online
  - to validate the accuracy of information they access online
  - how to acknowledge the source of information accessed online
  - to respect copyright when using material accessed on the internet
  - how the internet can promote an unrealistic image of relationships,
  - what to do if they / or a friend are subject to bullying or abuse online.
  - how to be mindful not to post images or videos of others without their permission
- iv. Whenever overseeing the use of technology (devices, the internet) in school, all staff encourage sensible use, monitor what pupils/students are doing and carefully evaluate potential dangers and the age appropriateness.
- v. Equally, all staff carefully supervise and guide pupils when engaged in learning activities involving online technology (including, extra-curricular and extended school activities if relevant), supporting older students with research skills, critical thinking (e.g. fake news), age appropriate materials and signposting, and legal issues such as copyright and data law.

## **5. Students’ use of school-owned devices**

- i. The school does not permit students to bring any personal tablets or other devices to school at all. Senior School pupils are assigned an iPad which is exclusive for educational use within school and is restricted and managed according to the principles and policies outlined in this document.
- ii. Pupils are not allowed to take these devices home.
- iii. Pupils are responsible for any loss or damage to these devices.
- iv. Pupils are responsible for using their school-assigned devices appropriately and will be held accountable for any inappropriate use.

## **6. Use of other mobile technologies**

- v. Mobile technologies are smart mobile phones and other tablets.
- vi. Mobile phones: the school does not permit pupils to use their phones on school site for any purpose. Any pupil in possession of a mobile phone which they bring to school must hand their phone in to the school office upon entering the school building, before morning registration, and collect it when leaving the school building, following afternoon registration.
- vii. Important messages and phone calls to or from parents can be made at the school office or using the school’s other communication channels such as ParentMail and Slack. Parents are asked not to call pupils on their mobile phones during the school day.

- viii. The school strongly emphasises and advises parents to allow very limited and restricted use of mobile devices such as smart mobile phones and tablets to their children outside of school premises. It is better if a shared computer used by the family is stationed in public area of the house where internet research or other activity can be conducted on a set schedule under the watchful eyes of involved parents.
- ix. All staff who work directly with children (teaching staff) should leave their mobile phones on silent and only use them in private staff areas during school hours. If a staff member is expecting an important personal call when teaching or otherwise on duty, they may leave their phone with the school office to answer on their behalf or ask for the message to be left with the school office.
- x. Parents or other visitors are asked to leave their phones in their pockets when they are on site. They should ask permission before taking any photos, e.g. of displays in corridors or classrooms, and avoid capturing other children.

## 7. Engagement with social media

- i. Social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat) is a broad term for any kind of online platform which enables people to directly interact with each other. However, some games, for example Minecraft or World of Warcraft and video sharing platforms such as You Tube have social media elements to them.
- ii. There is a growing body of research into the wide-ranging effects of social media on young people's mental health, with calls for social media companies to share anonymised data for research. There is increasing evidence on the addictive nature of social media, as well as evidence linking social media use and depression in young people, with studies showing that increased use is associated with significantly increased odds of depression. The unrealistic expectations set by social media may leave young people with feelings of self-consciousness or low self-esteem.
- iii. The school expects parents of junior school students to ensure that their children do not engage with social media in any way. Additionally, the school strongly emphasises the risks of senior school children's presence on social media platforms and advises parents of senior school pupils to severely restrict their children's engagement with social media and to reinforce key messages at home about their presence on these platforms.
- iv. Pupils, staff and parents are reminded that nothing on social media is truly private.
- v. If members of the school community are using social media, the school will strive to ensure that no reference is made in social media to pupils, parents or school staff, most critically ensuring that:
  - there are no online discussion on personal matters relating to members of the school community
  - personal opinions are not attributed to the school
- vi. Where school staff or pupils have a personal presence on social media, the following rules strictly apply:
  - staff are not permitted to follow or engage with pupils of the school on any personal social media network account.
  - pupils are not allowed to be 'friends' with or make a friend request to or 'follow' any staff, volunteers or otherwise communicate with them via social media. Whilst this can be hard to control, it highlights the need for staff to remain professional in their private lives. In the reverse situation, however, staff must not follow such public student accounts.
  - staff are obliged not to bring the school or profession into disrepute and the easiest way to avoid this is to avoid inappropriate sharing and oversharing online.

## 8. Responding to breaches or to incidents of misuse

- i. The school will consider sanctions for misuse of mobile phones, including failure to hand into School Office, and for bringing in tablets and personal devices.
- ii. In line with the DfE guidance 'Searching, screening and confiscation: advice for schools' (2018), the Headteacher and staff authorised by them are able to search pupils and property on school premises. This includes the content of mobile phones and other devices, for example as a result of a reasonable suspicion that a device contains illegal or undesirable material, including but not exclusive to sexual images, pornography, violence or bullying.

## 9. Education: parents and guardians

- i. Many parents and guardians have only a limited understanding of online safety risks and issues, yet they play an essential role in the education of their children and in the monitoring and regulation of the children's online behaviours. Parents may underestimate how often children and young people come across potentially harmful and inappropriate material on the internet and may be unsure about how to respond.
- ii. The school will endeavour to assist parents with their awareness of developing technologies and give advice on how to support children towards safe, responsible and appropriate use of the internet and other digital technologies. This may be covered through:
  - Lecture series
  - Discussion groups or parents' morning sessions
  - Letters and newsletters
  - High profile events/campaigns
  - Reference to the relevant publications and resources
- iii. It is recommended that parents additionally:
  - Set a good example with their own device use
  - Establish their own family agreement for screen-time and rules for access to digital technologies to use at home that is respected and followed by all members of the family.
  - help children build critical thinking to understand that some features on platforms are design to keep you watching or playing
  - have discussions about the risks that they may face online
  - Use technical tools and parent control to limit and manage children's access
  - Get the whole family to unplug and create 'screen free' times and spaces at home

## 10. Roles and responsibilities

- i. Senior School Leaders are responsible for:
  - fostering a culture of safeguarding where online safety is fully integrated into whole-school safeguarding
  - setting best examples in practice for the use of digital technologies for school students, staff and parents
  - monitoring how staff implement this policy to ensure consistency across the school incident taking place
  - keeping staff updated and aware of online safety issues and of the potential for serious child protection/safeguarding issues to arise from:
    - sharing of personal data
    - access to illegal/inappropriate materials

- inappropriate online contact with adults/strangers
  - potential or actual incidents of grooming
  - online bullying
- reviewing and approving this policy.
- ii. All staff are responsible for:
- ensuring they have an up to date awareness of online safety matters and of the current school Online Safety Policy and practices
  - reporting any suspected misuse or problem to the Headteacher for investigation, action or sanction
  - striving to embed online safety issues in all aspects of the curriculum and other activities
  - checking that their students understand and follow the Online Safety Policy
  - helping their students develop a good understanding of research skills and the need to avoid plagiarism and uphold copyright regulations
  - ensuring that they monitor the use of digital technologies, mobile devices, cameras, etc. in lessons and other school activities (where allowed) and implement school policy with regard to these devices
  - ensuring that all digital communications with students, parents or guardians is on a professional level and only carried out using official school systems
  - (in lessons where internet use is pre-planned) guiding students to sites checked as suitable for their use and that processes are in place for dealing with any unsuitable material that is found in internet searches
  - understanding the importance of adopting good online safety practice when using digital technologies out of school themselves and realising that the school's online safety policy covers their actions out of school, if related to their membership of the school.

## 11. Implementing the policy

- i. This policy can only impact upon practice if it is a (regularly updated) living document. It must be accessible to and understood by all stakeholders. It will be communicated in the following ways:
- Posted on the school website
  - Available on the internal staff network, Huddle.
  - Available in paper format in the School Office
  - Given as part of a school induction pack for all new staff
  - Integral to safeguarding updates and training for all staff (especially in September)
  - Used and referred to as part of education programmes for parents and pupils
  - Reviews of this online-safety policy will include input from staff, pupils and other stakeholders, helping to ensure further engagement

## 12. Staff Training

Online safety training for staff is integrated, aligned and considered as part of the overarching safeguarding approach:

- i. All staff receive online safety training and understand their responsibilities, as outlined in this policy.
- ii. A planned programme of formal online safety training will be made available to staff. This will be regularly updated and reinforced.

- iii. All new staff receive online safety training as part of their induction programme, ensuring that they fully understand the school's online safety policy.
- iv. This online safety policy and its updates will be presented to and discussed by staff in staff meetings and training sessions.

### **13. Monitoring arrangements**

This behaviour policy will be reviewed by senior school leaders every two years, and as changes to statutory guidance require in between this period.

### **14. Links with other policies**

This behaviour policy is linked to the following policies:

- Safeguarding policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Behaviour Policy

