

Sydenham School Guidance on the use of Electronic Communication

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To be reviewed July 2018**



Section 5.13 – Guidance on the use of Electronic Communication

Introduction

1. Access to phones, faxes, e-mail and the Internet is provided to support the School in the provision and improvement of its services.
2. The School wants to create a learning environment for its staff and encourages all employees to become proficient in the use of e-technology. This will lead not only to new and exciting ways of service delivery but to a more enjoyable working environment for staff who can develop useful transferable skills. Staff are encouraged to become familiar with e-technology so that they can use it without difficulty.
3. Set out below is a Code of Practice regarding use of the internet, e-mail phones and faxes. It provides a framework for operating within a rapidly changing area of activity. It is meant to enable all users to get the maximum benefit from those facilities. It clarifies the school's expectations of those using School telecommunications systems and identifies their responsibilities. Staff must comply with it.
4. In this document the term 'users' includes all School staff and any others authorised to use the School's telecommunications facilities in the course of their employment or provision of services to the School.
5. In particular, the school is committed to maximising appropriate email and Internet usage for the benefit of learning and encourages all users to be proficient in their use and to explore the possibilities that the internet and e-mail provide for service innovation. Using the Email and Internet offers great opportunities to work smarter and to improve services. The School wants users to make full appropriate use of these facilities.
6. E-mail and Internet access also introduce risks for the school as an organisation and for users as individuals. Many of these risks exist in other ways of working and communicating whether this is by letter, by telephone or in person. However e-mail and the Internet - and the way we use them - raise some particular issues. This document is an attempt to manage those risks constructively whilst promoting internet and e-mail use. It also provides guidance on authorised telephone and fax use.
7. The Code of Practice may be supplemented from time to time by supplementary guidance that addresses the special circumstances that arise in some work areas. That supplementary guidance will apply in conjunction with this general Code of Practice and users must comply with both
8. Managers should also ensure that consideration is given to any special local considerations that require supplementary advice to people working in their work area. For example, where particularly sensitive data is

handled on a day to day basis, or where best practice promoted by professional institutions is available, special attention may be required.

9. Use for School E-mail and internet, telephones and fax facilities is provided only for School purposes. They should be used for that purpose. However, the School acknowledges that there may be occasional minimal use other than for School purposes. Examples of excessive use would include; single use involving several hours during working time and/or repeated episodes of shorter use during working time. These examples are not exhaustive.
10. Personal use. Some uses are absolutely forbidden (such as accessing pornographic sites on the Internet or using e-mail to forward pornographic images). In other circumstances, what is acceptable is a matter of degree. If in doubt users should seek advice from their manager.

11. Infrequent minor use of telephone, fax, e-mail and the internet for personal purposes may be permissible if the following criteria are observed:-

- The use of internet or e-mail is outside the School's core hours
- The use is not for a purpose which is prohibited by this code of practice or explicit management instruction
- Personal use by the user is not excessive, whether on a single occasion or in general.
- The personal use does not detract from the user's ability to perform their duties properly, or that of their colleagues .
- The use is not in contravention of this Code of Practice
- The privilege of personal use has not been withdrawn either generally or from the individual by a manager. Managers may not consent to use of the facilities other than in accordance with this paragraph.

Because of the cost of mobile telephone calls, employees who use them for personal use are required to reimburse the costs incurred in such use.

Personal use of telephones, fax, e-mail and access to the Internet, like any School facility is a privilege, which may be withdrawn at any time and users must justify their use of internet and e-mail if asked to do so.

12. Prohibited Use of Internet and E-mail Users may not use the School's phones, faxes or computer systems including e-mail and internet facilities for any of the following:-

- any criminal activity,
- gambling,
- creating, accessing, distributing, storing or downloading - pornographic material - material that is racially or sexually or otherwise offensive
- to distribute defamatory material of any kind
- party political purposes
- harassment of any person

- use of 'chat room' communities on the Internet other than in connection with School business
- downloading games, screen savers or other executable programs
- distributing 'chain mail'
- any other purpose which the School informs employees is a prohibited use

Managers may not consent to use of phone, fax, internet or e-mail for any of these purposes.

13. Staff need to ensure that use of all social media, networking and apps are as safe as possible in terms of privacy settings and what is open access etc. Members of staff using such sites for personal use outside school should not agree to add existing or past students as 'friends'. If there is a reason to add 'past' students as friends, discuss this with your line manager or the safeguarding team first. Staff using these sites must not bring the school into disrepute through any entry or contribution made; this might include comments made about the school or members of the school community.

14. Online dating websites and apps:

Your online reputation is important for your current and future employment, so be cautious about your online presence, ensuring that you separate your work and personal life very distinctly.

Be aware that having posted your details on a legitimate online internet dating site or ap, they can be found by students or parents, so any teachers using them should be very careful not to get themselves into compromised situations.

You are less likely to be contacted by students if you join a fee-paying site. It is also advisable to choose the option to remove yourself from any advertising that gets shared with other websites. Our advice is that staff only make contact with over 21's so the risks of contacting current or recent students is minimised. Don't put anything too detailed about work on your profile and choose carefully the photographs that you include.

Monitoring

15. The School routinely and randomly monitors accessed internet sites and e-mail on its computers as well as the extent of telephone and fax usage.

16. The School reserves the right to monitor telephone calls, faxes, internet sites accessed or e-mail sent or received using its facilities for the purposes of detecting unauthorised use, fraudulent or other criminal activity and improving service provision. Users should be aware that the School may monitor use of all telecommunications facilities. Therefore management checks on use of these facilities may mean that others have access to any messages sent on School facilities. There can be no expectation of privacy in anything created, accessed, stored, sent or received on the School's telecommunications and computer systems.

17. You must take as much care with communication by e-mail as with any other written form of communication. E-mail is routinely stored, can be misdirected very easily and cannot be retrieved as some other forms of written communication can be. There are particular risks with personal use of e-mail where your language may be less formal and particular risks with e-mail that is being sent externally since this can be interpreted as committing the school in a way that was not your intention.
18. Sending, receiving and holding e-mail correspondence may involve the processing of personal data which must be dealt with in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. This may require you to notify and/ or seek the consent of the subject about why you are processing their personal data and who you may pass it to. They may also be entitled to a copy.
19. E-mail is generally not a secure method of communication, although encrypting messages can provide some security. As a general rule, whenever possible e-mail should not be sent that includes sensitive information that can be associated with individuals.

Inappropriate use

20. Defamation: In all forms of communication if you make negative statements about a person or another business based on false statements of fact you run the risk of being sued for libel or slander and exposing the school to potential liability. E-mail and other electronic communications (bulletin boards etc) pose a particular threat of claims for defamation because of the speed with which e-mail can be created and sent, and because on-line information can be distributed more widely. Users must not use defamatory language in any communication
21. Bullying/ harassment: Given the speed with which electronic communication can be created and sent there is a risk that poorly written and/ or repetitive communication will be taken as bullying or harassing colleagues. This is no more acceptable electronically than in any other form.
22. Pornography: There is no legitimate business interest in employees accessing or transmitting sexually explicit material while at work. Nor is it acceptable to the School that anyone should use School facilities for creating, accessing or transmitting such material for personal use. You must not do so and you must report any accidental access to such sites or telephone numbers.
23. Overall, material that is fraudulent, harassing, embarrassing, sexually explicit, profane, obscene, intimidating, defamatory, or otherwise unlawful or inappropriate must not be sent by phone, fax, e-mail or other form of electronic communication, or displayed on or stored in School computers. Users encountering this type of material by accident or receiving it must immediately report the incident
24. School telecommunications and computer systems may not be used for personal business use. This includes the dissemination or storage of commercial or personal advertisements, solicitations or promotions.

25. Gambling: Lewisham's telecommunications and computer systems may not be used for gambling.

Access

26. You may not alter or copy a file belonging to another user without their permission and you may not use the computer system to unnecessarily view other people's files or e-mail. You should not access or attempt to gain access to any restricted computer files. Nor should you seek to circumvent data protection measures that are installed on the system.

Protecting school property

27. Passwords are the principal means by which access to your computer and your documents is controlled. You must take care not to disclose your password to anyone. You should change your password if it becomes known to anyone else and otherwise at least every 60 days.

28. You must take precautions against introducing viruses to the school's computer systems. You must only access the Internet through a computer attached to the school's network through the firewall. You should not access the Internet directly.

29. You should not install or use unauthorised encryption software. There are laws on the export of encryption software

30. You must never seek to mask your identity in anyway when using e-mail.

Copyright

31. The risk of copyright infringement is greater using e-mail than traditional communication methods and there are particular risks associated with forwarding copies of e-mails. You do not 'own' material just because it has been sent to you. You must ensure that you are not breaking copyright law in sending material by e-mail.

32. Much of the software on the school's computers is governed by licence agreements. These licences do not generally allow for software to be copied and you must not copy any software for use on home or other computers. .

Use of resources

33. You must not deliberately perform acts that waste computer resources or unfairly monopolise resources to the exclusion of others. These acts include sending mass mailings. Chain e-mail (a message sent to a number of people asking each recipient to send copies with the same request to a specified number of others) can quickly become a substantial drain on computer resources. In turn, this can reduce the effectiveness and the speed of your computer. You must not distribute chain e-mail.

34. You should not store unnecessary copies of e-mail correspondence, although you should consider whether material should be kept. If you are in doubt about whether correspondence should be retained, please consult your line manager.

Breach of Code of Practice

35. Breach of this Code of Practice will be taken seriously and may result in disciplinary action, including possible dismissal without notice or warning, and/or civil and/or criminal liability and/or withdrawal of the facilities. If you are unsure about any issue concerning use of e-mail or the Internet ask! In normal circumstances, raise the issue with your line manager in the first instance.
36. In particular breaches of paragraphs 9 and 10 of this Code of Practice may potentially be deemed to be gross misconduct and may result in dismissal. However, this is not meant to be exhaustive and other serious breaches may also result in dismissal.