



# Nottinghamshire County Council

## E-mail and Internet Code of Practice for Schools

10 May 2011

### **TO ALL SCHOOL USERS**

"Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC) continues to place increasing reliance on its computer systems and networks.

Everyone within NCC has a responsibility to control risk and to report errors in judgement or procedure where they see them. Doing so reduces our exposures and helps to maintain our client image.

This document outlines your responsibilities in respect of the computer systems you use. Adherence to it is each person's individual responsibility."

Wilful or negligent disregard for this document will be investigated and may be treated as a disciplinary matter.

**Mick Burrows**

**Chief Executive**

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. Electronic mail (e-mail) and the Internet are essential elements in 21<sup>st</sup> century life for education, business and social interaction. Internet use in school helps to raise educational standards, promotes pupil achievement, and supports the professional work of staff. With these opportunities comes a need to recognise some potential risks for users and to take steps to minimise them. With this in mind schools authorised to use Nottinghamshire County Council's (NCC) e-mail and Internet service must ensure they have in place 'Acceptable Use Policies' (AUPs) to protect all their users.
- 1.2. NCC's e-mail and Internet service provided to schools represent a considerable commitment of NCC 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 utilised properly. The use of these facilities without appropriate permission or for a purpose not authorised by the school could constitute a criminal offence under various Acts including the Computer Misuse Act 1990 and the Data Protection Act 1998 and could also be subject to appropriate disciplinary procedures including dismissal.
- 1.3. This document is intended to define in a clear and straightforward manner what those risks are and to ensure NCC's Internet and e-mail service is used properly, without infringing legal requirements or creating unnecessary risks.
- 1.4. Schools must read this document alongside their ICT policies and implement their own e-mail and Internet AUPs to ensure all adults and children understand the conditions under which NCC's Internet and e-mail service may be used within their school.

## 2. Scope

- 2.1. This document applies to:-
  - 2.1.1. All permanent, temporary and casual staff working at a school.
  - 2.1.2. Pupils;
  - 2.1.3. Consultants, contractors, agency staff, governors, parents and others working at the school, including those affiliated with third parties who may be given access to NCC e-mail and Internet services.

(**Note:** Throughout this policy, the word "user" is used to cover all of the above.)

## 3. Policy Statements

### 3.1. Responsibilities of the School

- 3.1.1. It is the responsibility of each school to ensure all users use NCC's e-mail and Internet service in an acceptable manner and in accordance with the schools AUPs and any e-mail and Internet agreements (see Appendix A and B) established by the school.
- 3.1.2. Schools must establish their own policy statements within the context of the services provided to them by NCC and in a form that is compatible with the conditions expressed in this document.

- Access to Internet or e-mail must only be permitted through an authorised user account and all use must be linked to such an authorised account.
- Users must immediately report to the head teacher (or their nominee) if they receive offensive e-mail.
- Users must not reveal details of themselves or others in e-mail or Internet communication, such as address or telephone number, or arrange to meet anyone.
- Users must protect their passwords at all times and not divulge them to anyone. If a user knows or suspects their account has been used by another person, the user must notify the school's head teacher immediately.
- Users must never put in an e-mail message what they would not be prepared to put on headed paper. Equally, users must never put in an e-mail what they would not be prepared to say verbally. Confidential information must not be sent by email unless it is appropriately protected.
- Users must be aware the school reserves the right to access messages sent over the e-mail system to protect its computer systems, or where there is an indication of a threat to the school or to its users. Users must never assume that e-mail content is confidential.

### 3.2. Unacceptable Use

- 3.2.1. NCC's Internet and e-mail service may not, under any circumstances, be used to transmit, search for, engage in, or access any communications or images which are:
- 3.2.1.1. Harassing – Material that might be deemed as harassment by others, including but not limited to material relating to gender, race, sexual orientation, religion, disability or other similar issues, including insults, and 'jokes';
  - 3.2.1.2. Discriminatory – Material that might be deemed as discrimination by others, including but not limited to material relating to gender, race, sexual orientation, religion, disability or other similar issues, including insults, and 'jokes';
  - 3.2.1.3. Copyright – Use copyrighted material, unless specifically permitted by the copyright holder;
  - 3.2.1.4. Criminal or Unlawful – Material that would amount to a criminal offence or incitement to commit a criminal offence, including any material that is fraudulent or otherwise unlawful;
  - 3.2.1.5. Offensive or Insulting - Material, which might reasonably be expected to cause distress to others;
  - 3.2.1.6. Pornographic / Racist – Pornographic or racist material including child sexual abuse images or excessively violent or sexually explicit material;
  - 3.2.1.7. Incidents which appear to show intentional access to material that contain the following type of material, must be reported to the police for investigation;

- Child sexual abuse images (i.e. images where children are or appear to be under the age of 16 and are involved in sexual activities or posed to be sexually provocative);
  - Adult material/pornography that potentially breaches the Obscene Publications Acts (1959 & 1964);
  - Racist or violent/sexually explicit material;
  - Violence and bomb making;
  - Illegal taking or promotion of drugs.
- 3.2.1.8. Commercial Activities – Engage in commercial activities, including offering services or merchandise for sale or ordering services unless authorised by the school for legitimate business reasons;
- 3.2.1.9. Wasting resources – Using the Internet or e-mail in a way that denies service to other users (e.g. deliberate or reckless overloading of network equipment), disrupting the work of other users, downloading images, MP3 files, music, screensavers, DVD's, or films or video games unless there is an express school related use for the material.
- 3.2.2. Disable or attempt to damage or vandalise hardware, software, data or other property of another person or organisation.
- 3.2.3. Download or distribute pirated software or data or upload software licensed to NCC, or to upload data owned by NCC without good reason and is covered by disclosure provisions of Data Protection Act 1998.
- 3.2.4. Access peer-to-peer (P2P) file sharing programs unless there is a school requirement.
- 3.2.5. Deliberately corrupt or destroy other users' data, disrupting the work of others or violating the privacy of other users.
- 3.2.6. Use the Internet or e-mail to intentionally interfere with the normal operation of the Internet or e-mail connection, including the propagation of computer viruses and sustained high volume network traffic (sending or receiving of large files or sending and receiving of large numbers of small files or any activity that causes network congestion) that substantially hinders others in their use of the Internet.
- 3.2.7. Use the Internet or e-mail for soliciting, representing personal opinions or revealing confidential information or in any other way that could reasonably be considered inappropriate.

#### 4. **Personal Use**

- 4.1. The main purpose for the use of email and Internet in schools is for teaching, learning, research, and approved business activities of the school. However, schools wishing to allow limited personal use should only do so subject to the following limitations:
- The level of use is reasonable and not detrimental to the main purpose for which the service is provided;
  - Priority is given to the use of resources for the main purpose for which they are provided;
  - Personal use is not of a commercial or profit-making nature, or for any other form of personal financial gain;

- Personal use is not connected with any use or application that conflicts with the users obligations to the school as their employer or as a pupil;
- Personal use is not connected with any purpose or application that conflicts with the school's rules, regulations, policies and procedures;
- Personal use complies with school's policies and regulations.

## 5. **Web Site Publishing Guidelines**

- 5.1. Many schools have created excellent websites that celebrate pupils' work, promote the school and provide useful links to web sites of interest to staff and pupils. Schools wishing to publish information on their web site must consider the inclusion of the following conditions in their AUPs. This list should not be considered as being exhaustive.
- Names and photographs that identify individual children must not appear on the school web site;
  - Home information and e-mail identities of pupils must not be included on the web site. The only information that must be published is the point of contact at the school i.e. phone number, school address and e-mail address of Head Teacher;
  - Group photos of pupils must not contain any personal information about the pupils;
  - Written permission from parents or guardians should be obtained before images of pupils appear on the website;
  - Work displayed on the web site should always be of the highest quality and reflect the status of the school.

## 6. **Monitoring**

- 6.1. The first responsibility for monitoring the use of the Internet and e-mail lies with the school. The school must ensure that it has in place its own AUPs that detail to all users the monitoring arrangements in their school. It is important users are aware of this and knowing the school is taking such steps may also act as a disincentive for users to misuse school equipment and systems. The AUP should cover the following as a minimum:-
- Physical observation (supervision of use by staff, where appropriate) and local technical monitoring;
  - NCC's own monitoring and logging arrangements on the use of its Internet and e-mail service;
  - E-mail and Internet "filtering" service provided by NCC to minimise the chances of users encountering undesirable material.

## 7. **Reporting Abuse**

- 7.1. Each school's AUP must clearly identify to all users the procedures within their own school for reporting abuse, including securing and preserving evidence. The procedures in the AUPs should distinguish local incidents that are resolved within the school, and those that need to be escalated to NCC ICT Service Desk (Schools) or other relevant authorities.

- 7.2. Schools should always advise its users if they suspect or believe that the Internet or e-mail is being used in a way that breaches their AUPs, they must report it to NCC ICT Service Desk (schools), who will initiate the appropriate NCC action.

## 8. **Compliance**

- 8.1. It is the responsibility of the school to take all reasonable steps to ensure compliance with the conditions set out in this document, and to ensure unacceptable use of the e-mail and Internet does not occur. The discharge of this responsibility also includes informing all users of their obligations in this respect.
- 8.2. Schools are advised where it becomes necessary to withdraw the e-mail and Internet service by NCC it is likely to take one of two forms.
- An indefinite withdrawal of service, should a violation of these conditions persist after appropriate warnings have been given by NCC. Such a withdrawal of service would only be made on the authority of the Director of ICT Services of NCC. Restoration shall be made only when NCC is satisfied that the appropriate steps had been taken at the school involved to ensure compliance with NCC policies in the future;
  - A suspension of service, should a violation of these conditions cause serious degradation of the service to other users of the NCC network. Such a suspension would be made on the judgement of NCC, and the service may be restored when the cause of the degradation of service to others had been removed.
- 8.3. Where violation of these conditions by a school is illegal or unlawful, or results in loss or damage to NCC resources or the resources of third parties accessible via the NCC network, the matter will be referred for legal action by NCC.

## 9. **Legal Action**

- 9.1. Schools at all times must comply with the laws and policies as they relate to the use of ICT facilities provided by NCC. In addition, the school will be required to observe best practice and operational guidelines published in respect of such facilities provided by NCC or any relevant professional body. Where potential criminal activity is suspected by the school they will refer the matter to NCC and to the police for further investigation.

## Appendix A

### E-mail and Internet Use Agreement

All schools must establish an e-mail and Internet use agreement for pupils covering the expectations the schools have of pupils using NCC's e-mail and Internet service in school. All pupils and their parents / guardians must be asked to read and sign the agreement.

### A template for an E-mail and Internet Use Agreement

This e-mail and Internet agreement must be read through with your parent(s) / guardian(s) and then signed. You will be allowed e-mail and Internet access after this is returned to school.

- We expect all pupils to be responsible for their own behaviour in using the Internet and e-mail, just as they are anywhere else in school. This includes materials they choose to access, and language they use.
- Pupils using the Internet are expected not to deliberately seek out offensive materials. Should any pupils encounter any such material accidentally, they are expected to report it immediately to the head teacher (or their nominee).
- Pupils are expected not to use any rude language in their email communications and contact only people they know or those the head teacher (or their nominee) has approved. It is forbidden to be involved in sending chain letters.
- Pupils must ask permission before accessing the Internet.
- Pupils must not access other people's files unless permission has been given.
- Computers must only be used for schoolwork and homework unless permission has been granted otherwise.
- No program files may be downloaded to the computer from the Internet.
- No programs on disc or CD Rom should be brought in from home for use in school.
- Homework completed at home may be brought in on disc but this will have to be virus scanned by the class teacher before use.
- Personal printing on the school network (e.g. pictures of pop groups/cartoon characters) is not permitted unless permission has been given.
- Personal information such as phone numbers and addresses must not be given out and arrangements must not be made to meet anyone unless this is part of an approved school project and has been approved by the Head Teacher.
- Pupils consistently choosing not to comply with these expectations will be warned, and subsequently, may be denied access to e-mail and the Internet resources.

I have read through this agreement with my child and agree to these safety restrictions.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (Parent/Guardian)

Name of child: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B

Dear Parent,

### **Responsible use of e-mail and the Internet**

I am sure you will have heard about some of the problems that can arise when young children use e-communication systems such as the Internet and e-mail - problems that range from bullying to the grooming of young children by adults.

The Internet is now part of everyday life, and so we cannot ignore it. But at the same time the school takes every precaution to ensure that your child is safe when using the Internet and e-mail at school.

In addition to the school taking its own precautions, we are aided by our colleagues at Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC) who provide the Internet filtering service to the school to ensure that all children are as safe as possible when using the Internet and email at school.

The Internet filtering service restricts access to sites containing inappropriate content. All our screens are in public view and normally an adult is present to supervise.

No system is perfect, however, and you should be aware that it is not possible to remove entirely the risk of finding unsuitable material. We have been asked by NCC to inform you of the rules which the children are expected to follow to help with our precautions. Early indications are that the children benefit enormously from this facility and are using it very responsibly already.

I would ask you to look through these rules and discuss them with your child and then return the signed form to us at school.

If you would like to have a look at our full 'Policy for e-mail Internet Access', I will be more than willing to forward you a copy- particularly by email as this is cost free to the school. E-mail me on ----- marking the subject as 'e-mail and Internet Policy'.

Yours faithfully

Head Teacher