Staff Guidelines for the Safe Use of Digital Technology

Schools working remotely with students | March 2020

Netsafe has created the Staff Guidelines for the Safe Use of Digital Technology template to help schools and kura describe the way digital technology and online spaces are used in their school community as they move to support students remotely from March 2020.

The following guidelines can be used by any school or kura, however we encourage schools to customize these to reflect the needs of staff and those they work with.  Allowing for consultation and unpacking these with staff is advised and having opportunities to create these in conjunction with staff is ideal.

The document is comprised of different sections that guide

1. A school’s approach to online safety and the safe use of digital technology
2. Staff responsibilities for the safe use of digital technology and online spaces for learning and as a member of the school community
3. Staff response to and management of incidents

## How often should staff guidelines be updated?

A well-constructed guideline for staff on the use of digital technology and online spaces can remain relevant for some time without needing to be updated. However, Netsafe recommends the guidelines be reviewed annually, and updated where appropriate to ensure all staff are aware of their responsibilities, and importantly, provide opportunity to discuss and adapt to school’s context. Where staff are part of a wider discussion around aspects of the guidelines, this may support a more contextual application of expectations and needs.

## Should my school make staff sign the staff guidelines?

No. You can, however it is recommended that this document is kept with other policies and guidance that support employment information. Please note that guidelines that are not communicated and explained are not easily enforced and are of limited value to building a culture of safe digital technology use. The school should look to ensure staff understand the guidelines by supporting them with appropriate information and opportunity to discuss aspects of it.

## Where can I get further support?

Netsafe has created a dedicated website for the education sector which contains a variety of resources, information and templates that will help support schools and its community with their online safety goals.

For more details visit netsafe.org.nz/the-kit.

## Staff Guidelines for the Safe Use of Digital Technology *[insert school/kura name]*

### overview

Digital technology continues to create opportunities to learn and connect our school community. *[Insert school/kura name]* believes in using a digital citizenship model to support safe, responsible and ethical use of digital technology and online spaces as it helps our online environment to be a positive place for everyone.

Digital technology and online spaces are an integral part of teaching and learning, but it does not come without challenges. The school operates under the assumption that challenges will arise. The school will support staff through the management of reported accidental or unavoidable incidents. In turn, we expect staff to take reasonable steps to minimise harm occurring within the school community.

These guideline outlines *[insert school/kura name]* role in using digital technology and online spaces for learning and supporting online safety, as well as your responsibilities as a member of our online community.

### *[Insert school/KURA name]* role

*This section outlines your school’s approach to supporting safe digital technology use*

*This section outlines our school’s approach to supporting safe digital technology use*

*[Insert school/kura name]* recognises the opportunity that digital technology has brought to learning. Our students have a right to receive a high-quality education in a safe online and offline environment. We know that online spaces are complex and full of challenges for young people. This is why we want to create a culture of safe, responsible and ethical technology use that helps support learning while reducing exposure to online risks.

*[Insert school/kura name]* recognises the complexity that digital technology and remote learning has brought for educators. We are committed to supporting our team to manage the risks that you and your students may face.

We will do this by:

* Providing information and support to ensure staff and students are aware of, and able to meet their responsibilities;
* Offering a curriculum that reinforces and promotes positive online safety behaviours;
* Providing technology that oversees students’ use of the school’s digital devices and platforms;
* Allowing the use of technology for personal reasons as long as it does not negatively impact on others;
* Supporting staff and students who need help dealing with online incidents;
* Securing the personal information, the school collects about you;
* Protecting your freedom of expression under New Zealand’s Bill of Rights;
* Having a plan in place when something serious or illegal happens. This might include getting in touch with the Police or Netsafe.

### Your responsibilities

*This section outlines what your school/kura considers appropriate professional conduct in the use of digital technology and online spaces in school and as a member of the school community.*

Staff members of *[insert school/kura]* community are guided by the professional conduct outlined in the Codes and Standards (Education Council of Aotearoa NZ) and how these relate to the safe use of digital technologies and online spaces in schools, including where learning is required to take place remotely.  As role-models for students, staff have a responsibility to uphold school’s values and ensure our online environment is a positive place to learn, connect and enjoy. This means modelling safe, responsible and ethical use of digital technology and online spaces.

The school directly oversees and is responsible for the use of devices, systems and principles in place designed to support learning. These are as below:

* **Password security:**Use strong passwords and keep them private. Do not share your login details or use others’ login details.
* **Log in and out:** This is an essential security measure for keeping sites and content safe.
* **New software:**Always ask first and seek permission from the school IT manager/team before downloading software to the school network or devices that connect to the network to ensure they do not interfere with the school’s equipment/network or the online security of another person.
* **Personal device security:**Staff are responsible for the security settings of their own devices. Staff should endeavour to ensure devices used within the school learning environment, including online learning spaces, has appropriate security software, that all software is up to date – and that the devices are free from any harmful content which could be accidentally exposed during use.
* **Offensive content:**Do not bring into the school or the remote learning environment or add to school systems content that is considered inappropriate for students.
* **Recognise copyright and intellectual property:**Follow copyright and intellectual property requirements by attributing references, images, text, audio and video appropriately.

At times, staff also use technology that is not directly governed by the school. It is important to recognise that technology blurs the lines between what is strictly inside of school, and that from outside of school and therefore within the jurisdiction of employment agreements.

For staff safety and the avoidance of doubt, the following requirements apply to activity that may impact a staff members’ ability to perform their role or on the safety of other members of the community.

* **Know the law:**New Zealand has a number of pieces of legislation that govern online spaces. You should be familiar with your responsibilities under these acts to ensure you are operating within the law and are able to guide students to do so.
* **Protect your reputation:**Social media can expose our private lives to our professional communities. Be wary of how and where you post personal content that could undermine your reputation as a teaching professional.
* **Share with care:** Freedom of expression protects our right to share our views, but it does not protect people from the harm expressing those views can create. Be wary of creating or forwarding content that could be considered harmful, inappropriate or hurtful to any member of the school community.
* **Protect privacy**: Don’t disclose sensitive personal information about another person in any digital communication and consider what information you share about yourself online. Messages that you send privately can be made public by other parties.
* **Keep it offline:**Don’t participate in our community’s disputes online.From time to time disputes will arise between parents and/or students within the school community and can be carried out online. The school has processes in place for complaints and disputes should be handled through these channels where possible.
* **Get consent for content:**Only record and share video, photo or audio content if the people in it know it has been taken and have provided their consent.

Given the current closure of schools across New Zealand, reliance on technology for communication and learning will be significantly greater than usual.  These exceptional times mean other key aspects of the staff-student/home relationship need to be explicitly referenced.

It is important that as an educator that you:

1. **Keep it visible.**  Avoid engaging in private chats or messages with students, and keep communications visible where possible.

2. **Keep it safe**.  If you are connecting with students via online platforms, make sure you don't use your personal account.  Set up a school based one so you can keep personal and professional separate.

3. **Keep it private.**  If you are connecting with students via video conferencing platforms, make sure you think about your location.  Avoid bedrooms and private spaces or areas which share information about your location. Some platforms offer a ‘blur background’ option which might help if sharing accommodation or workspaces.

4. **Keep it transparent.**  Connect with parents, families and whānau prior to beginning remote learning and let them know how you will be interacting with students, which platforms you will be using, why you will be using them and what you are expectations are around behavior and appropriate communications.

5. **Keep it focused.**  Technology is a powerful learning tool, but it can be invasive with our ability to connect, leading to an expectation that we are available 24/7.  Set up times when you are available and block out times when you are offline and not able to be contacted.  You need time to recharge, plan and to be with your families too.

### Online incidents

*This section outlines how staff are expected to respond if students seek support and assistance or if they encounter any online concerns.*

Despite the advantages technology offers and people’s best intentions, sometimes there will be challenges and harm will occur. Staff are expected to action incidents regardless of whether they were accidental or purposeful in nature. Even incidents that occur outside of the school (which includes time allocated for remote learning) or outside of school hours, are required to be actioned if they are negatively impacting on student learning and wellbeing.

*[Insert school/kura name]* is committed to supporting staff to manage online safety incidents.

**Receiving reports**

Incidents of online bullying or harm are not tolerated at our school including when working remotely and students are encouraged to report them to any staff member. Staff are expected to receive these reports and to take appropriate steps in response. These appropriate steps are outlined in the school’s procedures for managing online incidents.

**Responsibility to report**

If you become aware of any online incident or suspected incident with a potential to cause harm to a member of this school community, you must act upon it. Incidents impacting students within your care should be recorded and actioned following school procedures. Risk to other members of the school community of the school should be escalated appropriately.

**Supporting students**

Staff are expected to prioritise student safety and to escalate reports appropriately. Students should be encouraged and, if necessary, helped to preserve evidence including taking screenshots, of what is happening so an investigation can occur. They should be discouraged from putting themselves at further risk by engaging with the person(s).

**Abuse of staff**

Online abuse and harassment of staff is not tolerated by the school. Any staff member that is subjected to online abuse and/or harassment should be encouraged to seek support from school management. The school will mediate disputes or report them to external authorities including Netsafe as appropriate.

**Incidents involving you**

When you become aware of any online incident or breach of these guidelines that has the potential to cause harm to a member of this school community (including you), you are responsible for reporting it to school management. For matters that are complex, or sensitive – we recommend seeking advice and support from Netsafe.

**Support from Netsafe**

Netsafe is New Zealand’s independent online safety organisation and it provides services in support of educators and schools under contract to the Ministry of Education. They provide free confidential advice seven days a week. They can be contacted on 0508 NETSAFE (0508 638 723) or online at netsafe.org.nz/report

STAFF DECLARATION

*This section should be completed if your school would like staff to sign the guidelines*

I understand and agree to follow the Guidelines for the Safe Use of Digital Technology. I am aware that this applies to using any digital technology and online space while at school or during periods of remote learning, and for any school activity on a device that the school does not own.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Name  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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