

Belfast Model School for Girls
Achievement for All



Acceptable Use of the School's Virtual Learning

Agreed by Board of Governors: Dec 2011

To be reviewed: Dec 2014

Rationale

Since all pupils seek to use ICT to enhance their learning across the curriculum, the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) has been developed to provide a wide range of interactive activities, course support materials and access to supported structures of learning in a safe and monitored online environment. School staff will be responsible for the development, upgrading and updating of course contents, taking appropriate steps to ensure that materials for the use on the VLE are in addition to and do not replace those available in the classroom.

Purposes

The VLE:

- Allows pupils to access an online learning structure specifically designed to enhance their learning experiences
- Facilitates the acquisition of transferable ICT skills that can be used in other curriculum areas in school, in continuing education or training and in employment
- Encourages pupils to engage in valuable collaborative learning experiences and receive online mentoring support from peers and teachers
- Provides centralised access to online tools such as eMail, Google Docs and Video Conferencing reviews.

Guidelines

Every teacher will have the opportunity to gain the necessary knowledge to monitor every pupil's use of this medium. Teachers have the necessary pedagogical knowledge to devise appropriate courses for use on the VLE and will be given the technical support to transfer information into a web-based format by the Webmaster.

Staff are happy to give parents advice if they have any concerns about the home use of computers for accessing any course information, discussion forums, chat facilities, school email or messaging facilities hosted in the VLE.

- The school provides a filtered and monitored access to the VLE for pupils and staff. Nonetheless, no filtering service can be completely foolproof, and teachers ensure that pupils using the VLE from school behave in a responsible manner.
- A copy of the school's policy on the Acceptable Use of the VLE and Acceptable Use of the Internet is available to parents on the school website www.belfastgms.org
- Pupils and staff are made aware that the school routinely tracks and records discussion forums and chat facilities within the VLE
- Pupils are aware that written communications on the VLE are monitored by teachers. While normal privacy is respected and protected by password controls, users must be aware that written communications stored on the VLE are not absolutely and unconditionally private. This excludes email which is provided by GoogleMail as a third party.

Pupils are encouraged to:

- Use email facilities to communicate with other pupils, teachers, other schools and industry where such an activity is part of a structured online course
- Engage in online learning activities including games and quizzes for the purpose of assessments, within the structure of the VLE
- Develop their competence in ICT skills and general research skills
- Collaborate with pupils from other schools.

Pupils are not permitted to:

- Use the VLE in such a way that disrupts the use of the VLE by other users
- Download software or other files without permission.
- Send inappropriate e-mails, messages or engage in inappropriate, abusive or defamatory chat and forums
- Publish, share or distribute any personal information about any user (such as: home address; email address; phone number; photos)
- Use another user's password or allow other users to use their password
- Communicate to others any information, or engage in any activity which may result in the loss of or damage to another pupil's work
- Retrieve, send, copy or display offensive or pornographic information or images
- Use obscene, discriminatory or racist language, harass, insult or attack others
- Upload or use malicious code in any form within the VLE
- Search out or use security threats as this may constitute an illegal attempt to gain access to the VLE
- Falsely represent the school via their school email account.

Sanctions

Sanctions imposed are a result of a breach or attempted breach of prohibited pupil actions. The sanctions reflect the seriousness of an individual offence, are applied as soon as possible and in a fair and consistent manner.

The sanctions imposed for inappropriate use of the VLE are:

- Verbal warnings – these are given for attempts to contravene the rules or minor “one-off” offences. This will be followed, immediately, by written information to parents stating why sanctions have been applied. The pupil will be subject to a monitoring period of 4 weeks and continued use of the VLE will be reviewed after this period.
- In direct accordance with the school's behaviour policy for offences deemed as “cyberbullying”
- In very serious cases, a pupil will be immediately referred to the Pastoral Vice Principal

These policy Guidelines are translated into action through other policies and procedures, for example:

Behaviour Management Policy

School Rules

Child Protection Policy