ALMOND COLLEGE

STUDENT ONLINE SAFETY POLICY

Introduction

1. Online safety is defined as a school's ability to protect and educate students and staff in their use of digital technologies, while having appropriate mechanisms in place to prevent, identify, intervene, and support incidents where necessary.

2. At Almond College, promoting a safe online culture and protecting students requires the use of appropriate monitoring, filtering, and security controls to manage what users can access when connected to the School's network and digital systems.

3. However, Almond College recognises that technical controls alone are insufficient. Education and awareness remain the most effective means of ensuring that students are able to stay safe online wherever they are, whether on or off School premises, during term time or holidays.

Scope

1. Students, staff (teaching and support), and parents/guardians represent three core communities through which Almond College actively promotes best practice in online safety. By recognising and utilising our collective responsibility, professionalism, and experience, the School seeks to foster a consistent and positive digital culture.

2. This policy aims to reduce risks associated with:

• online bullying and harassment; • grooming, exploitation, and coercion; • youth-produced sexual imagery ("sexting"); • inappropriate or excessive use of social media and messaging platforms; • damage to personal and institutional online reputation; • access to inappropriate web content, including: o sexually explicit material; o extreme violence; o material intended to radicalise or exert extreme influence over the viewer; o misuse of identity, personal data, or identity theft; • overuse of digital technology, lack of self-regulation, and poor online habits; • careless online security practices that enable misuse by others; • hacking and malicious activity; • lack of awareness of the potential consequences of online behaviour.

The School also recognises the rapidly evolving nature of digital technologies and social media and commits to keeping this policy under regular review to reflect emerging trends and risks.

Practice

1. In order to safeguard students' emotional wellbeing and development, Almond College places age-appropriate restrictions on the use of social media and instant messaging platforms during the

school day and while engaged in School activities. Specific expectations regarding permitted use are outlined in the ICT Code of Conduct for Students. These restrictions are informed by evidence that younger students are particularly vulnerable to unkind or impulsive online communication that may cause distress to others.

2. Education relating to online safety is delivered through a whole-school approach involving students, staff, and parents.

Education and Awareness

For Students

Online safety education is provided:

• within classroom teaching, where appropriate, for example when researching online sources, with emphasis on accuracy, bias, and credibility; • through structured programmes within PSHE, Life Skills, and digital literacy lessons; • through the ICT Code of Conduct for Students, which sets out clear expectations for behaviour; • on an ad hoc basis in tutorials and assemblies, including discussion of age-appropriate current affairs and media stories related to online safety; • through external speakers and specialists addressing topics such as online reputation, digital wellbeing, cyberbullying, and responsible social media use; • through cross-curricular activities, for example drama, media, or citizenship projects exploring online behaviour and its consequences; • by encouraging student responsibility, including opportunities for students to create online safety resources and campaigns; • by listening to student concerns and incorporating student voice through councils, forums, and pastoral channels.

For Staff

• Regular training through INSET and CPD programmes, including guidance on professional online conduct and safeguarding risks; • Annual safeguarding training reinforcing expectations around digital safety; • Clear procedures for reporting concerns regarding student or staff online behaviour.

For Parents and Guardians

• Provision of guidance and resources on online safety through School communications and the School website; • Invitations to talks, workshops, or information sessions led by specialists; • Regular updates regarding policy changes and emerging online safety concerns.

Sanctions

1. Breaches of this policy by students will be addressed in line with the School's Behaviour and Safeguarding Policies.

• Sanctions may include detentions, suspension, behavioural agreements, or other disciplinary measures deemed appropriate; • Students are made aware that online bullying, sharing inappropriate images or comments, and misuse of social media will not be tolerated; • In cases of repeated or particularly serious

misuse of the internet or digital platforms, the School reserves the right to impose more severe sanctions, up to and including expulsion.

Where appropriate, sanctions will be accompanied by pastoral support and educational intervention.

Technical Online Safety Arrangements

1. Almond College has the following technical online safety measures in place:

• ICT Codes of Conduct for staff and students; • secure user access controls, including individual logins and strong password requirements; • multi-factor authentication for remote access to School systems where applicable; • regularly updated antivirus and security software; • network-level security restrictions; • encryption of email and portable devices where appropriate; • monitoring and filtering of email communications; • web filtering and monitoring of internet access on the School network; • managed wireless access controls; • physical security controls for servers and data infrastructure.

1. In exceptional circumstances, for legitimate educational purposes, students may be required to access online material that would normally be restricted. In such cases, staff may request temporary access through the School's ICT and safeguarding procedures. Any such decision will be authorised by senior leadership and appropriately recorded.

Investigating Incidents and Breaches

1. Any actual or suspected online safety incident that places a student at risk must be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or a member of the senior leadership team, who will initiate appropriate safeguarding and investigative actions.

2. Other breaches of this policy that do not pose an immediate safeguarding risk should be reported to the relevant Head of Year or pastoral lead. Serious or repeated breaches will be escalated to senior leadership.

3. Online safety reports are reviewed regularly during term time, and appropriate action will be taken directly with students, through parents/guardians, or with external agencies where necessary.

Monitoring and Review

1. The effectiveness of this policy will be monitored and evaluated regularly by the School's leadership. The policy will be formally reviewed at least annually, or sooner if required by changes in legislation, technology, or safeguarding guidance.

Associated Policies

1. This policy should be read in conjunction with:

• Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy; • Information Security and Data Protection Policy; • ICT Code of Conduct for Students; • ICT Code of Conduct for Staff; • Behaviour Policy.

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