



Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup

ICT (including E-Safety and Social Networking) Policy

Principle

The Child (NI) order 1995 and publication of "Our Duty to Care", emphasise that the "welfare of the child" is paramount. With this in mind, the purpose of this policy is to safeguard children and staff of Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup from the misuse of the internet, email and social networking sites.

Statement of intent

E-Safety concerns safeguarding children, young people and staff in the digital world. Technology is an important part of everyday life and so E-Safety focuses on learning to understand and use new technology in a positive and safe way.

The purpose of this Policy therefore is to help support and protect children and staff when using technology in the setting. Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup will

ensure the safe practice in the use of the internet, effective control measures to enable children and staff to use ICT (Information Communication Technology) resources in a safe online environment and provide guidance to staff to prevent the misuse of internet and social network sites.

The ICT (including E-Safety and Social Networking) policy will apply to internet access through any medium. The policy covers Internet, email and all electronic communications via computers, laptops, mobile phones, iPhones and wireless technology.

The policy will cover the children in attendance at Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup staff, volunteers, visitors, students, Committee members and contractors.

Guidance for safe practice when working with Children

1. All staff and adults working with children in attendance at Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup will understand the risks when working with ICT equipment and their "Duty of Care" towards children, with regards to child protection.
2. When conducting ICT sessions, one member of staff will be present at all times to provide adequate supervision.
3. All staff and adults working with children in attendance at Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup will ensure that only child appropriate sites are accessed.
4. Computers used by the children will have unsuitable sites blocked or barred.
5. Regular checks to ensure blocking/barring of unsuitable sites will be carried out by the Designated Child Protection Officer (see Safeguarding Children and Child Protection policy for details of Designated Officers).



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Staff responsibilities

All staff members are responsible for the following:

1. All staff will understand the Playgroup E-Safety and Social Networking policy, and the significance of their role in E-safety.
2. Staff are responsible for understanding the significance of E-safety which highlights the importance of safeguarding children.
3. Staff will use the internet in an acceptable way that does not create an unnecessary business or child protection risk through the misuse of internet or email within the Playgroup setting.
4. Staff will work within the boundaries of professional behaviour and comply with all e-safety legislation.
5. Due care will be taken by all staff to ensure confidentiality, data protection and any personal information that must be sent via email goes to the correct recipient.
6. Staff are responsible for protecting themselves from legal challenge and ensuring that they work within the boundaries of professional behaviour.
7. Complying with current legislation.
8. Using the Internet in an acceptable way.
9. Being aware of the potential risks of using social networking sites eg Facebook, and the importance of considering the materials they post and how publishing unsuitable materials may affect their professional status.
10. Staff should report all suspicions of misuse of this policy to the Playgroup Leader, where the suspicions are relating to the conduct of the Leader, staff should report to the Committee Chairperson, as per whistle blowing policy.

In particular, the following is deemed unacceptable use or behaviour:

1. Visiting Internet sites that contain obscene, hateful, pornographic or otherwise illegal material.
2. Sending, forwarding, distributing or retaining email or text messages that contain language or images that are abusive, aggressive, obscene or offensive.
3. Using the Internet to send offensive or harassing materials to others.
4. Making any improper or discriminatory reference to a person's race, colour, religion or belief system, sex, age, national origin, sexual orientation, disabilities or physique, and not forwarding or distributing any material which does so.
5. Publishing defamatory and/or knowingly false materials about the Playgroup. This will result in disciplinary procedures and possible dismissal from post.
6. Using work email systems to set up or send chain letters, viral emails or spam.
7. Using the Internet for personal purposes during work time.



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8. Using the computer to participate in any form of fraud, theft or software or music piracy.
9. Failing to take due care to make sure confidential and/or personal information goes to the correct recipient.
10. Broadcasting personal views on social, political, religious or other non-business related matters.
11. Undertaking deliberate activities that waste staff effort or networked resources.
12. Sending an unauthorised email on behalf of an individual inside or outside Ballygawley Early Years without their knowledge or consent.
13. At no time should staff make reference to a child/children in attendance to Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup on a social networking site, internet chat room or email, as this is a breach of confidentiality.

Leader/Deputy Leader or Designated Person responsibilities:

1. Ensuring staff are aware of and understand this policy and how it relates to other relevant policies.
2. That required training is received for relevant staff on e-safety.
3. Putting relevant systems in place to ensure the protection of information and appropriate access to Internet, e.g. passwords on computers, limited access to certain sites.
4. Monitoring the policy to ensure that staff are complying with it; this includes the rights of the Leader/Deputy Leader to access emails, images and internet sites visited where there has been a suspicion of improper use.
5. Dealing with breaches of policy and ensuring that the highest standards of practice are maintained.
6. Reporting issues or incidents to Committee Chairperson e.g. need for further support on e-safety or breach of policy.

Note: For specific information regarding the use of mobile phones within the setting, please see the Mobile Phones policy.

Breach of policy

All employees should be aware that any failure to comply with this policy will be taken seriously and may be dealt with in accordance with Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup disciplinary policy and procedures. If an employee is found to have breached the policy, they will face a disciplinary penalty ranging from a verbal warning to a dismissal from post. Where a criminal offence is suspected, the matter will be referred to Police.



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This policy was adapted at a meeting of our playgroup held on the 1st September 2026

Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed annually by the management team to ensure it remains fit for purpose.

This policy was reviewed by the Ballygawley Early Years Management Committee on:

Date: 01/09/2026

Signed:
(on behalf of the Management Committee)

Name and Position: Iona Devine, Chairperson

Reviewed on:

Date: Signed: Position:

Date: Signed: Position:

Date: Signed: Position:

This policy links to the following policies:

- Safeguarding Children and Child Protection policy
- Whistleblowing policy
- Confidentiality policy
- Data Management policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Photography and Videography policy
- Mobile Phone policy
- Code of Conduct (Staff Policy)