



Our Lady's Girls' National School

Ballinteer Avenue

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19396J

Right to Disconnect Policy

Introduction:

Following the publication of the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) Code of Practice for Employers and Employees on the Right to Disconnect, in April 2021, a recommendation followed that all workplaces should work to develop a Right to Disconnect Policy that takes into account the particular needs of the workplace and its workforce.

The Board of Management of Our Lady's Girls' National School recognises that the health and wellbeing of employees is of the utmost importance and integral to maintaining high standards of teaching and learning in our school. The Board of Management encourages and supports all school staff to achieve a healthy work-life balance. Disconnecting from work and maintaining clear boundaries between work and personal time is vital for employee wellbeing.

The Board of Management of Our Lady's Girls' National School recognises that every employee is entitled to switch off outside of their normal working hours and enjoy their free time away from work without being disturbed, unless there is an emergency or agreement to do so.

To encourage and support our employees in balancing their personal and working lives, we have adopted a 'Right to Disconnect' policy, which includes best practice guidance around wellbeing, working hours, the use of technology and more. The Board of Management recognises that the ability to switch off from work is key to supporting the health and wellbeing of the staff, and therefore to effective teaching and learning in school.

Purpose:

1. This policy has been produced in accordance with the WRC Code of Practice. The objective of this policy is to highlight that all employees have a right to disconnect from work outside of their normal working hours and to set out the rights and obligations of employers and employees in this regard.
2. To support staff in having an appropriate life/work balance.
3. To outline communications procedures between staff and any other school stakeholders.

Health & Wellbeing:

In accordance with section 13 of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 (SHWWA 2005), staff must take reasonable care of their health and safety. Staff are reminded to switch off from work, to monitor their working hours and to take breaks away from work devices.

The Board of Management recognises that staff do work outside of the opening hours of the school. The duties of teachers in particular do mean that they work hours above and beyond classroom contact hours. Staff are encouraged to set a finish time for themselves and to stick to it, to monitor their working hours and to take breaks when necessary when working outside of contact hours.

School Leaders

School leaders will endeavour to foster a culture that supports the right to disconnect and acknowledge the importance that, barring emergency situations, all staff should be able to disconnect from work.

Communications:

The personal time of staff is respected and there is a general expectation that staff will disconnect from work e-mails and communications outside of normal working hours, except where it is necessary for operational reasons – eg to inform school leaders about absences.

Where possible, e-mails/texts should be checked or sent only during normal working hours. No communications should be sent over the weekend or school holiday periods, with the exception of information pertaining to emergencies, emergency closures or toward the end of summer holiday periods with regard to return to work procedures.

When sending a communication all school stakeholders should give due consideration to the timing of their communication and potential for disturbance, and the recipient should understand that they will not be expected to respond until their working time recommences.

Staff should not feel that they must respond to communications from outside stakeholders or colleagues outside of working hours. This extends to social media communications also.

Should a stakeholder wish to speak to a staff member, they are requested to contact the staff member or the office to set up an appointment.

Emails:

All staff are provided with a school email address to facilitate internal communication between staff members and external communication with outside stakeholders/external agencies. The Board of Management recommends that staff do not have email notifications for this account on their phones.

Meetings:

Meetings should only be scheduled during normal school hours, except where national agreements and Department circulars stipulate otherwise.

Parental communications:

Communication with parents is an important part of the effective running of the school. We welcome parental input. With regard to emails, parents are reminded that emails sent during the school day are unlikely to receive a response until the end of the school day, or in the following couple of days. Patience is requested in this matter as teaching and learning is the first priority of all staff.

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Respectful communication:

All communication between school staff, other stakeholders should be respectful and polite at all times. Emails or other written communications should be phrased in a professional and respectful manner.

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management at their meeting on 26/6/23

Michael Conroy (Chairperson)

Robbie Murphy (Principal)