Distance Learning Policy

Ratified at BOM Meeting on 21st October 2020 (Online Meeting due to Covid-19)

Signed ………………………………………………………………..Chairperson of Board of Management

Signed …………………………………………………………..Principal

Date…………………………………………………………………..

Date of next review………**September 2021 (if Distance Learning still part of Government Guidelines)**

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This policy was devised as a result of the Covid-19 restrictions and was written during the lockdown phase in May 2020, as the school was using remote learning to communicate with all children in the school.

Aims:

The aims of this Distance Learning Policy are

- to provide guidelines and information for children, their parents, guardians, and school staff, surrounding the use of technology when learning remotely

- to ensure that children will benefit from distance learning opportunities offered by the school in a safe and effective manner.

-This policy takes into consideration the use of digital platforms and recognises that they are an important part of distance learning.

- It also aims to ensure that the privacy and professionalism of the teaching staff and Special Needs Assistants is respected at all times.

School's strategy

The school will employ a number of platforms in order to maximize learning opportunities in the distance learning setting. The school will endeavour to combine a number of online and offline activities to support the children's learning. These strategies are as follows:

Seesaw:

The school is using Seesaw from JI to 6th class. Seesaw is a platform for children to engage in work and communicate with their teacher. Children use creative tools to take pictures, draw, record videos and more to capture learning in a portfolio. Teachers plan and create activities to share with children and children can respond directly to these activities and also upload work. Teachers are also able to interact with children by posting comments on work, both verbally and orally. Parents will give their written consent for their child to use the platform (see Appendix 1). Seesaw is fully GDPR compliant. More can be seen on their website at https://web.seesaw.me/gdpr

WebEx

The school also uses WebEx meetings to virtually meet and interact with the children. Teachers will send out a link and time to log into these class meetings in advance.

Online Video Class Guidelines with Cisco WebEx:

• Parents must be notified that the child is joining a virtual classroom prior to the session and monitor and assist their child or children where necessary.

• Children must do their best to join the classroom on time.

• Only the child from the specific class can attend.

• Children must use appropriate volume and language.

• Children must be courteous and respectful of other children in the virtual classroom.

•Children must wait their turn to be invited to speak.

• Children will be unable to use the text chat feature to chat to each other privately during video calls. Teachers may however, wish to allow children to use the chat feature to chat publicly during a video call. In this instance, the teacher will assign the necessary permission to all children.

• Children/parents must not take a photo or video of any online class meeting.

• Children must end/leave the meeting when the teacher says to do so.

• The meeting link a child receives should not be shared with anyone else.

• Staff expectations on behaviour in a virtual classroom remain exactly the same as a physical lesson in the school. A teacher may remove any individual behaving inappropriately from the meeting.

• At least two members of the staff should be present for any video conferencing sessions and parents and children will be informed of who these are.

• Staff and children should consider their surroundings and background while taking part in a video conferencing session.

Distance Learning is a Shared Responsibility:

All of us are adjusting to a new reality due to the huge changes that have taken place in our lives since the emergence of Covid-19 in March 2020. Due to the school closure, the education of our children must now take a different form. It is also important to note that, while children have a right to their education, teachers have a right to their privacy and their professional life. We all have a shared responsibility to ensure, to the best extent possible, the continuity of our children's learning and the protection of our teachers' privacy. All content and access codes are for our children's use only and are not to be shared externally. It is recognised that the impact of school closures will affect families in a number of ways and we are aware of the need for flexibility from both parents and the school. It is also recognised that access to technology may be limited due to parents working from home or with a number of siblings requiring access to devices for studies.

It is also important to take into account that technology can fail and new ideas have to be tested through trial and error. Therefore a willingness to adapt to changes and difficulties on all sides is essential. The use of digital communication platforms may not be appropriate or possible for some children. In these cases alternative arrangements will be made.

Responsibility of the School

Due to the global and connected nature of Internet content, it is impossible to guarantee that access to unsuitable material will never occur. The school cannot accept liability for the material accessed, or any consequences resulting from Internet use. However, the school will take all reasonable precautions to ensure that users access only appropriate material when assigning activities. All of our school's policies still apply during this period of Distance Learning. The Board of Management and staff of Rush and Lusk ETNS sets out this policy in accordance with the provisions of the: Educations Act 1998, Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017, Code of Behaviour, GDPR, Anti-Bullying and Internet Acceptable Use Policies. Education (Welfare) Act (2000) (c) Equal Status Act (2000) (d) Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004) Disability Act (2005) (all of our school's policies are available on www.ralet.ie)

Responsibility of the Teacher

Our teaching staff are continually working hard to develop their skills to provide for distance learning. There is ongoing collaboration with teachers in the same year groups, with SET's, SNA's and with the school as a whole. The teacher has a responsibility to:

• Engage with children on a daily basis

• Facilitate the further development of literacy and numeracy skills.

•Provide a blend of guided and independent learning activities and experiences in line with current planning already in place

• Cultivate understanding of different people and cultures.

• Provide opportunities to display child creativity across a range of curriculum areas.

• Practise listening and speaking skills.

• Enhance collaboration and critical thinking skills.

• Provide a variety of ways in which children can demonstrate their learning.

• Motivate and engage children in new ways.

• Differentiate tasks where required

Teachers and SNAs when working remotely will on most occasions try to communicate online during normal working hours and will endeavour not to communicate with children or parents outside of these hours. However, everyone's circumstances are different and we have to be as accommodating to all members of our school community as we can. Parents and students need to be aware that teachers may have to send material/ assignments outside of regular school opening hours. This does not mean there is an expectation on the child to begin work at the time it is received. Likewise, there is never an expectation on the teacher to have to correct or comment on work sent on seesaw outside of normal school hours. Whilst it might suit teachers or families to communicate outside of normal working hours, it is essential that everyone agrees that responses or actions outside of normal working hours are not required.

How will ICT be used?

With a classroom teacher acting as a guide/moderator, children may use these tools for a range tasks, such as (but not limited to):

• Compiling research

• Classroom discussions via video call apps.

• Multimedia projects

• Reports

• Demonstrations

• Assignment completion

• Classroom support

Children's use of web-based tools is for educational purposes only and at the direction of a teacher and under the supervision of a parent/guardian. All lessons created by teachers in the school remain the intellectual property of the school and should not be shared without prior consent.

Child safety

The safety of our children is always our primary concern, so sites endorsed by Rush and Lusk ETNS for child use have been carefully evaluated. The following protective measures are in place for our use of web-based tools.

• Wherever possible, teachers will choose sites offering publicly available activities.

• In cases where this is not possible, only the teacher will be registered with a whole-class account to be used by all children.

• Children will never be required to submit personal information.

• All child activity within Seesaw (posts containing work, comments on other children posts etc.) and other online platforms will be closely monitored for appropriate use and conduct. **All school conduct rules apply online-see behaviour policy/anti-bullying policy**

• Work submitted by children on Seesaw can only be seen by the teacher and not by other children in the class. Comments made by the teacher can only be seen by the child whom the comments are intended for. Occasionally, a teacher may ask a child if they would like their work to be shared on the Seesaw Blog.

• All work submitted on Seesaw must be approved by the teacher first.

Responsibility of the Child:

• Children will not intentionally visit Internet sites that contain obscene, illegal, hateful or otherwise objectionable materials.

• Children will report accidental accessing of inappropriate materials immediately to a parent/guardian

• Children will not copy information into assignments and fail to acknowledge the source (plagiarism and copyright infringement).

• Children will not send or receive any material that is illegal, obscene, and defamatory or that is intended to annoy or intimidate another person.

• Children will never disclose or publicise personal information.

• Children will never communicate using personal emails or numbers

• Children will not access Seesaw or any other online software (e.g. Mathletics, IXL etc.) using another child's account/codes.

•Children cannot take screenshots/photographs/videos of any other children and/or staff during distance learning lessons and video conferencing or any work on Seesaw.

• Children will not upload photographs/videos /voice messages of other children or staff to the Internet.

• Children will not post comments about other children and staff to the Internet.

• Children must only make positive comments about other children's work on the Seesaw blog.

Responsibility of the Parent/Guardian:

As a school we are endeavouring to ensure a mix of online and offline activities for our children to create a balanced distance learning environment. Our school is aware of the challenges that the current crisis has placed on all of our families. The safety of our children on the web is of utmost importance and parents/guardians have an essential role to play in this regard:

• When children use the Internet for school work as part of distance learning, it is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to supervise their work.

•Any child accounts will be created under strict protections and guidelines by the parent/guardian.

• Please ensure that online messages and comments to the school are respectful. Any messages written on distance learning platforms are treated in the same way as written messages to the school.

• Avoid any negative conversations about children, staff or parents on distance learning platforms.

Sanctions

Misuse of the Internet and distance learning platforms may result in disciplinary action, including written warnings, withdrawal of access privileges and, in extreme cases, suspension or expulsion as per the Code of Behaviour. The school also reserves the right to report any illegal activities to the appropriate authorities, including An Garda Siochána.

Communication:

The policy has been made available to school personnel via the school website (www.ralet.ie). A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department of Education and Skills and the patron (Educate Together) if requested.

Appendix 1: Distance Learning Consent Form:

Dear Parents/Guardians,

At Rush and Lusk ETNS, we acknowledge the importance of remote learning and the importance of having an online platform for children to access and submit work. We are using a child-friendly platform called **Seesaw**. **Seesaw** is a platform for child engagement. Children submit work/projects using photos, videos, drawings, text, PDFs, and links. We are seeking your permission for your child to use this platform.

Photos/Videos:

Occasionally your child may be asked to take photos/videos as part of their school work. These photos/videos are submitted via Seesaw. No other children will see the photo/video until it is seen and approved by their class teacher or support teacher. Photos/videos that are inappropriate, offensive, or are unrelated to the work requested will not be approved.

On Aladdin Connect please tick the box below to indicate you give consent for your child/ each of your children to use:

Seesaw:

- ❏ My child is allowed to post **photos and videos** of themselves, their work, and other school-related topics to Seesaw.
- ❏ My child is allowed to post **audio recordings** of themselves, their work, and other school related topics to Seesaw.
- ❏ My child is allowed to make positive and friendly comments on some of the other children's work which may occasionally be shared on the Seesaw blog with their permission. I know and acknowledge that these comments will be seen by a teacher for approval before they are seen by other children.

Webex:

- ❏ My child is allowed to take part in Webex video calls for lessons or for social reasons as explained above.

_____

Full name of child

_____

Signature of child

_____

Printed name of parent/guardian

_____

Signature of parent/guardian

Date _____