



## **Our Lady of Mercy Secondary School**

### **Distance Learning Policy**

This Distance Learning Policy has been developed to reflect the changed circumstances in learning in our school brought about by Covid-19 and the significant increase in the use of technology to continue the high standard of teaching and learning in OLM. The aim of this policy is to provide guidelines and information to students, parents, and staff surrounding the use of technology when learning remotely (i.e. from a place other than school where it is not possible for the teacher to deliver the class within the same location, as would be the case, if the class was taking place in a classroom setting.)

This new policy operates alongside all our existing policies. This policy does not set out to replace our Code of Behaviour's procedures on the use of Mobile Phones or Acceptable Usage Policy but rather intends to be an important addition for the area of teaching and learning from a digital platform. The policy should also be read concurrently with our school's Code of Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policy.

### **Introduction**

This document sets out the policy of the school in respect of use of technology for distance or remote teaching and learning and it operates in addition to our existing Acceptable Use Policy (AUP).

### **Scope of this Policy**

In all cases students must use their @olmdrimnagh.com account to log in to the recommended digital platforms. Students are not to use any other account under any circumstances for the purposes of distance learning.

The list of recommended applications that are used in OLM for distance learning are:

Office365, incorporating:

- Microsoft Outlook (e-mail)
- Microsoft Teams
- Microsoft OneNote
- Microsoft Forms
- Microsoft Stream

There may be some additional applications that teachers use, and the teacher will provide the student with the information required to access them. Again, students must, in all cases, use their @olmdrimnagh.com account as the login.

### **Distance Learning Approach**

Distance Learning will take place using what is known as a blended approach. In the case of school closure, teachers will use a mix of regular live classes insofar as is possible as well as individual and group tasks/assignments.

In the event of a student being unable to attend school, notes and assigned homework from lessons will be posted using one of the Office365 applications by the timetabled teacher. Live classes will not apply in the case of a student being unable to attend school.

In all cases the primary aim is to cover the required curriculum areas for their specific subject. The teacher will decide the most effective method to use to achieve this aim. Students should contact their teacher directly if they are having difficulty with any aspect of their subject or if they are finding the workload unmanageable. In the event of students having issues with IT,

they should make contact with the ICT Coordinator and/or the school to resolve any issue that can be solved.

The following will apply in the instance of a school closure.

### **Guidelines on the appropriate use of Online Platforms for engaging in distance teaching and learning:**

1. Students are required to check their @olmdrimnagh email and Teams account each school day to collect assigned work and instructions from various subject teachers.
2. It is important for learning that students attend all online classes and engage with the set tasks and activities to the best of their ability during times of distance learning and that they submit work on completion as advised by their subject teachers within the appropriate given timeline.
3. Students, teachers and SNAs will endeavour to have cameras working and switched on at all times during an online lesson/instruction, as students find it easier to engage with learning when this practice is followed and teachers can actively monitor who is in attendance.
4. Teachers will schedule online live classes at least 24hours in advance of the class and will always follow the established school timetable.
5. Teachers, when working remotely, will on most occasions, try to communicate online during normal school hours and will endeavour not to communicate with students outside of these hours. However, teachers may have to send material/assignments outside of regular school opening hours. In this instance there is no expectation on the student to respond or 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 outside of normal school hours. Whilst it might suit teachers or students to communicate outside of normal working hours, it is essential that everyone agrees that responses or actions outside of normal school hours are not required.
6. All members of the school community should turn off notifications outside of their learning/working hours.
7. Students should be familiar with the “three before me” concept and apply this when engaging in online learning. If a query arises; “Three before me” consists of
  - a) Re-read all instructions previously given by the class teacher.
  - b) Ask another individual in the class.
  - c) Post the question onto the class ‘Team’ page to allow other members of the class to respond.

If these steps do not provide adequate clarification, the student should then reach out to the teacher.

8. In so far as possible, provision for SEN students, will be made when using Remote Learning methodologies.

9. All members of the OLM School Community must abide by the normal school rules and policies when logged onto Teams or any digital learning platform or while learning remotely.
10. The material created by the teacher on Teams is the property of the School and students do not have permission to share to others outside of the Team to which the lesson applies unless given permission to do so. Recordings must not be made of any online tutorial unless the teacher has given permission to do so and with the consent of the students. In this instance, it is of utmost importance that any such recordings are not shared.
11. It is expected that students behave appropriately online, as they would in a classroom setting. During live classes microphones should be switched off when the teacher is speaking and only turned on to ask/answer questions or engage in the class when invited to do so. Cameras should also be switched on by all students and teachers.
12. The school is the owner and teachers are the managers of the Teams they create and will only correspond to a student who is signed up to the correct platform using their @olmdrinnagh.com login, unless alternatives have been agreed in advance with both parties.
13. Students should be mindful of email etiquette and communication tone when communicating with teachers as distinct from online communication with peers. For example, address the relevant party at the beginning of email, maintain a polite tone throughout, and sign off as appropriate.
14. As student internet access cannot be supervised by teachers during periods of distance learning, student personal responsibility is essential and/or parental/guardian monitoring where possible.
15. Social media sites e.g. Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Hangouts, WhatsApp etc, to communicate with students is never permissible and teachers have been advised accordingly. Social media may be used by teachers to demonstrate examples of good work to parents and the wider school community but will not be used for the conduct of teaching and learning. Any such activity will only be on the official school social media account (Facebook and Instagram). All names on student work should be redacted unless express permission to do otherwise has been obtained.
16. Any behaviour or language deemed inappropriate applies during online learning as per the Code of Behaviour. The consequences for such behaviour will be the same as if the student were physically in school.
17. The criteria for mandated Child Protection reporting remains the same as if the student were being taught in school.
18. All provisions relating to the student's data remains the same under GDPR procedures and guidelines.
19. As per all matters pertaining to our school's Code of Behaviour, if a student acts in a fashion that is contrary to our code's expectations, they will receive sanctions in line with the code.
20. It is expected that all students and teachers will engage as best they can with all efforts at online teaching and learning so as not to be behind when normal school resumes.

This Admissions Notice was adopted by the Board of Management on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2024 and will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Signed:



Chairperson of Board of Management

Date: 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2024

Date of next review: September 2025

Signed:



Principal/Secretary to the Board of Management

Date: 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2024