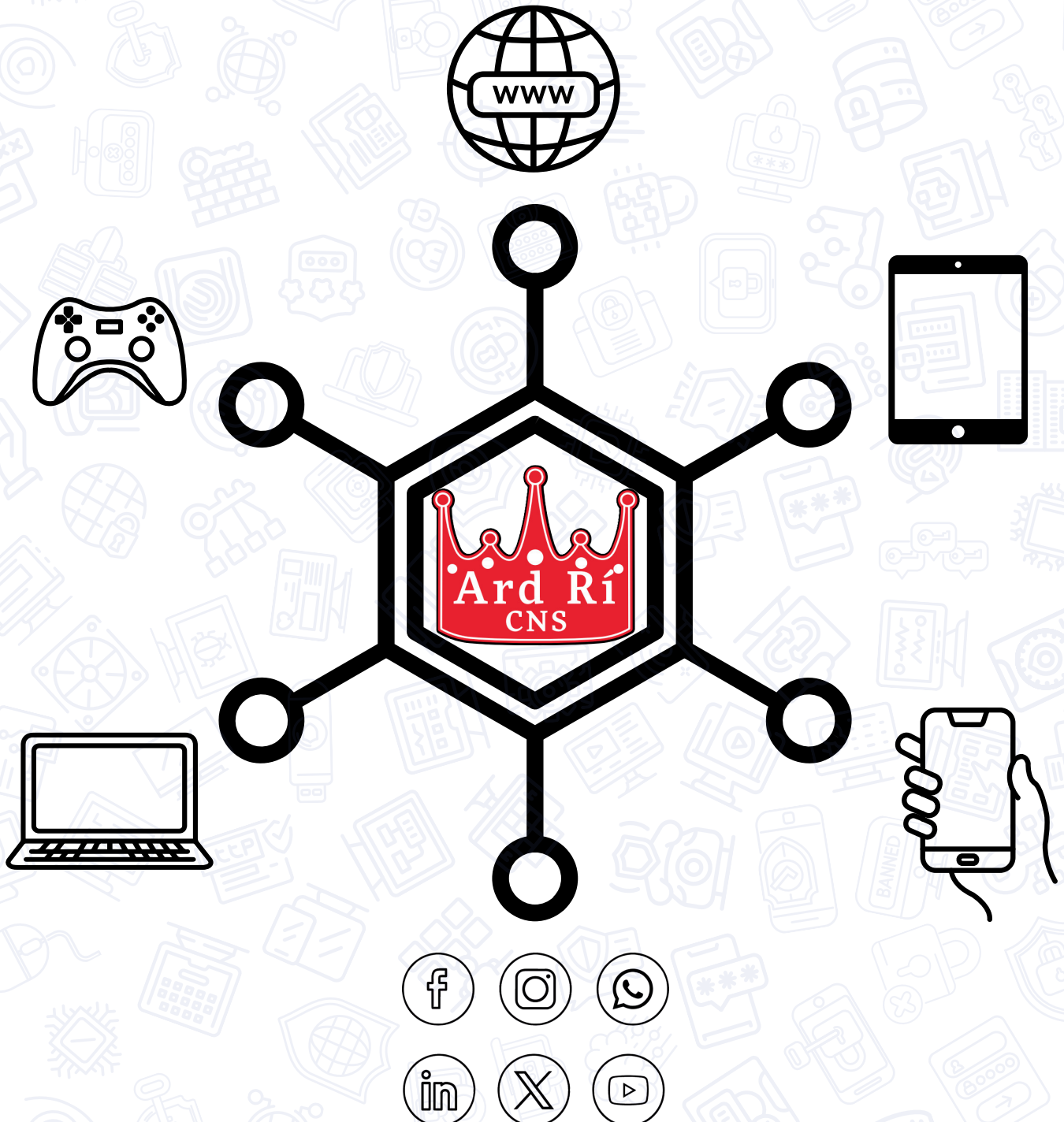


All Aboard!

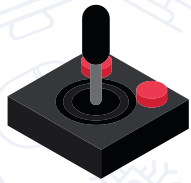
Internet and Technology Use Agreement



Informed by pupils, school staff team, Board of Management and parents/guardians of Ard Rí Community National School in the 2024/2025 school year.

It is compiled in conjunction with the Agree to Agree Project facilitated by Dr. Maureen Griffin, Forensic Psychologist, Director MGMS Training Limited and coordinated by Navan Education Centre.

Introduction from the Principal, Darragh Roe



As a father of three young boys and a school leader, online safety is something I think about every day. When I was at Primary School, Space Invaders on the Atari was high tech. Technology was so simple. We had five TV channels to choose from and recording music off the radio was the height of on-demand entertainment. But for my children and for the pupils in our school, the online world is a complex and core part of their everyday lives. Social media, YouTube, Snapchat and online gaming connect them to friends, entertainment and endless information, but they also bring risks we never had to think about growing up.

As a school community, we are deeply committed to promoting the well-being of all our pupils. In recent years, our teachers have become increasingly concerned about the impact of children's online activities on their school life. The Department of Education's 'Keeping Childhood Smartphone Free' initiative highlighted these challenges and school management became aware of a small number of school communities piloting programmes to promote online safety. It was around this time that our senior management team came across the Agree to Agree project, run by Navan Education Centre. This approach resonated strongly with our school's values, offering a proactive and collaborative way to protect our young people online.

Led by our School Self Evaluation Coordinator - Karen Dunne and a dedicated committee of parents - Emer Mugisha, Joshua Mugisha, Osni Oliveira and Mark Gaffney we embraced the process whole-heartedly. We gathered evidence. We listened. We surveyed school staff and parents and held focus groups with children. The findings were clear - while the online world offers many opportunities, it also presents significant risks and real causes for concern.

This project is uniquely ours - it is bespoke to Ard Rí CNS. Together, over the next three years, we will build a culture of online safety that will guide and educate our precious children, helping them navigate these challenging digital waters with confidence and care.

All aboard...Let's go Ard Rí!



Introduction from Parent Representative, Emer Mugisha

Like many parents, I remember a childhood where screen time meant watching cartoons on a Saturday morning and the biggest tech dilemma was untangling the cord on the landline phone. But for our children, the online world isn't a separate space...it's woven into their daily lives, from gaming and social media to learning in the classroom.

The benefits of technology are undeniable, but so too are the risks. As parents, we've all heard the worrying stories; children struggling with online pressures, exposure to harmful content or experiencing the impact of social media in ways we never had to.

What I love about this initiative is that it isn't about saying no to technology; it's about giving our children the tools to navigate it wisely. It's about partnership between parents, teachers, children and the wider school community so that we can support each other in making informed, confident choices about our children's online lives.

I want my children to grow up in a safe world, both offline and online, so I'm really excited to see us all build a culture of online safety at Ard Rí, one that empowers our children to thrive in this digital age.



Agree to Agree outline

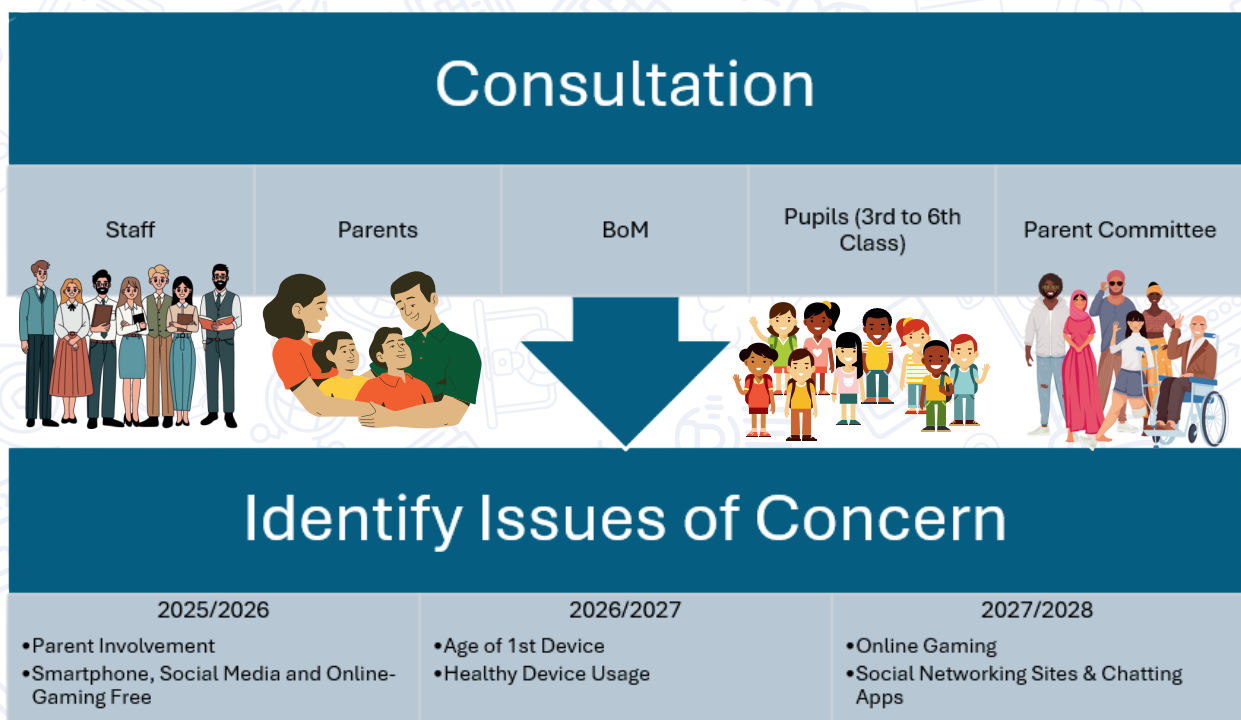
The use of smartphones and other technologies is now a feature of daily life for people of all ages. As you are likely aware, however, smart devices can particularly expose young children to risk - including exposure to harmful content (violence, explicit language, mature themes), cyber-bullying, online predators, scams and many children show signs of genuine addiction to their devices.

As a school community, parents and educators need to work together to create a culture where parents are informed, empowered and responsible for their children's internet and technology use. There is pressure on parents to purchase smartphones, tablets and consoles. Children feel 'everyone is online, except me'. There is strength in numbers. We want to empower parents by uniting you all together to protect our children from being exposed to harm when online.

Childhood is supposed to be a care-free and happy time. Now, in many cases children's lives are full of anxiety, self-doubt, and distress. We want your children to be happy and reach their potential during their Primary School years. **Pupils are not allowed to bring their personal and internet-enabled devices into Ard Rí CNS (Circular 44/25).**

All Aboard! Ard Rí's Internet and Technology Use Agreement will help teach our children and keep them safe online. By September 2028, the aim is to have full school adoption of this initiative and agreement. This is a voluntary agreement and we respect each family's right to decide. We cannot enforce this decision on parents but please know, as a school, we are regularly dealing with the fallout from children's online activity; ranging from exposure to harmful content and online risks to signs of genuine device addiction. This is a big problem.

Internet and Technology Use Agreement Process





2025/2026

Keeping Childhood Smartphone, Social Media and Online-Gaming Free



Research and Feedback:

Data gathered from school staff, parents and pupils showed:

- 73% of pupils have their own internet-enabled device(s). A further 36% have access to a shared/family internet-enabled device on a regular basis.
- 29% of parents feel pressure to allow their child(ren) have a smartphone, use social media and/or play online games because “everyone else” is doing so.
- 73% of parents said their child(ren) play online games. 24% of parents stated their child(ren) use social media including TikTok, Snapchat and Instagram.
- A large majority of parents feel pupils should be beyond 6th Class before having a smartphone (61%), use social media (86%) and play online games (40%).
- Staff note that device use at home is negatively impacting pupils’ emotional well-being, behaviour and academic progress. In particular its effect on social interaction and emotional regulation. Staff have witnessed an increased mimicry of violence, inappropriate language and children are exhausted in school due to screen time affecting sleep quality and quantity.
- 79% of pupils agreed that people should stick to the age restrictions for apps/games and websites. Overwhelmingly, 90% of pupils agree that while some apps/games can be fun to use, online safety and wellbeing is more important.

As a school community, our target is:

By 2028... All children at Ard Rí CNS will complete their primary school years free from smartphones, social media and online gaming, supporting their wellbeing, focus and positive development.

Implementation Timeline:

In November 2024, 88% of families with children in Junior Infants to 2nd Class committed to keep their child’s time at Primary School Smartphone, Social Media and Online-Gaming free. One more class will be invited into this initiative each year and by the 2028 school year, it will extend to the entire school population.

At Ard Rí CNS, we are committed to supporting children to complete their primary school years free from unregulated online content. This includes avoiding access to the following platforms and services:

Social Media & Video Platforms:

- TikTok
- Snapchat
- WhatsApp
- Instagram
- Bluesky / Discord
- YouTube
- YouTube Kids



Search Engines & Browsing:

- Google and other internet search engines

Online Games & Platforms:

- Roblox
- Minecraft (online version)
- Fortnite
- FIFA (online version)

This list is not exhaustive and will be reviewed regularly as new technologies and trends emerge.



2025/2026

Parent Involvement: Monitoring, Responsibility, Control



Research and Feedback:

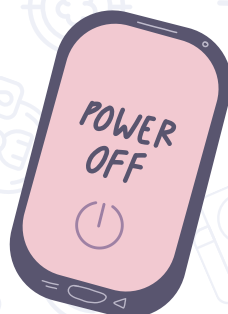
In Ireland, our digital age of consent is 16 years (Data Protection Act 2018). At the time of parental survey, 49% of parents were not aware of this. The digital age of consent is the minimum age a user must be before they can consent to internet companies/social networking sites etc. collecting, processing and/or storing their data. While robust age verification measures should be a key concern for online services, parental involvement is still central to protecting our children online. Therefore, it is parental responsibility to ensure that all apps are age-appropriate and approved by parents for all children under 16 years.

Data gathered from school staff, parents and pupils showed:

- 45% of parents are concerned about the amount of screentime their child(ren) are getting. 70% of parents noted their children get screentime before school and/or bedtime. Furthermore, 51% of parents reported their child gets, on average, more than 1 hour a day screentime with 16% getting more than 2 hours everyday. 74% of pupils agreed that children should have time limits for being online.
- 84% of pupils agree that parents/adults should be able to see what children are doing online. An overwhelming majority of staff feel screen time limits and parental monitoring would benefit pupils' wellbeing at school.

As a school community, we recommend the following:

1. At primary school level, devices should be co-owned by parents and used in open spaces in the home, where parents can supervise, monitor and observe. There should be no screen time in the bedroom including TV.
2. Daily time limits should be set for smart devices. Not all screen time is equal, so WHAT your child is doing online is as important as HOW LONG they spend online. Think not just about the quantity of screen time but rather the quality of activities your child may engage in. Minimise time spent doing passive sedentary activities like scrolling or mindless gaming. No screentime before school and 1 hour before bed.
3. Set aside times or places at home that are screen free zones, such as the kitchen table, mealtimes or after dinner. Schedule special times in the week for family activities that are screen free.
4. Parents should activate parental controls for all smart devices (including passwords, time limits, who can contact child, chat options etc.)
5. Don't rely on parental controls alone, parents should continue to monitor all smart and internet-enabled device usage. Normalise regular checks and discussions about their online activity on an ongoing basis without judgement.





Useful Resources for Parents



The CyberSafe Kids has some useful resources. Their “Parental Controls guide” and “Better Digital Parenting Guide” offers some great advice for children of different ages and their use of technology.

ISPC Digital Ready Hub

ISPC Digital Ready Hub provides support and information in helping children and young people to have positive experiences online.



Common Sense Media also has lots of up-to-date parental information regarding different apps and smart device use.



PEGI helps parents make informed decisions when buying video games, providing age classifications considering age suitability not just the level of difficulty.



Parental Controls



Family Sharing
Apple Family Sharing



Family Link

Google Family Link



Webwise offer lots of helpful advice in relation to managing children's screen time



UNPLUG TO RECONNECT WITH NATURE AND REALITY



CONCEPT & DRAWING: LAYLA ALI
4th CLASS
ARD RÍ CNS

Disclaimer

The information supplied in this document is intended as a guide, it does not replace the importance of parental involvement and supervision of a child's online activities. Links to external sites are provided as a convenience and for informational purposes only. They do not constitute an endorsement or an approval by Ard Rí CNS, of any of the products, services or opinions of the corporation / organisation / individual.

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Internet and Technology Use Agreement Sign Up Sheet



I/We (Parents/Guardians Print Name)

together with my/our child/children (Child Print Name and Class)

agree to the recommendations set out in the All Aboard! Internet and Technology Use Agreement, and I/We will implement these recommendations to the best of our ability in use technology at home.

Signed Parents/Guardians:

Signed Child/Children:



Please return this page, signed by parents/guardians and child/children to the school. Once received, the school will return a stamped copy to parents/guardians.