Bandonbridge NS
Staff Right to Disconnect Policy

Ratified by Board of Management: 03/11/2026

1. Policy Statement

The Board of Management recognises that staff wellbeing, reasonable working time and adequate rest are important to a safe and effective school.

Staff have the right:

- **to disengage from work-related electronic communications outside their normal working hours**
- **to not routinely perform work outside those hours**
- **to respect the right of others to disconnect.**

This policy does not prevent necessary flexibility, agreed work outside normal hours, or contact in emergencies. It is intended to establish reasonable boundaries rather than to prohibit communication.
(See also School Communication Policy)

2. Legal and Good-Practice Framework

This policy is informed by the current Irish framework, in particular:

- Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) Code of Practice for Employers and Employees on the Right to Disconnect (2021), approved by S.I. No. 159/2021 under the Workplace Relations Act 2015.
- Organisation of Working Time Act 1997, as amended, including statutory protections concerning working time, daily and weekly rest and maximum average weekly working time.
- Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005, including the employer's duty, so far as is reasonably practicable, to protect employees' safety, health and welfare at work.
- Employment (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2018 and Terms of Employment (Information) legislation, as amended.
- Where relevant, the Work Life Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2023 and the WRC Code of Practice on the Right to Request Flexible Working and Right to Request Remote Working (2024).

The Right to Disconnect Code is a statutory Code of Practice rather than a stand-alone statutory entitlement. While a breach of the Code is not itself an offence, the Code may be taken into account in relevant proceedings.

3. School Expectations

- Staff are not expected to routinely read, send or respond to emails, Aladdin messages, texts, calls or social-media communications outside their normal working time.
- Messages sent outside a recipient's working time do not create an expectation of an immediate response. A response may wait until the recipient next resumes work and has a reasonable opportunity to reply.
- Routine communications should not normally be sent at weekends or during school holidays. Exceptions may include emergencies, urgent school closures/safety matters, agreed arrangements, essential absence notifications, and necessary communications immediately before the return to school.
- Staff should use school-provided communication channels for school business where possible. Notifications on school email and Aladdin may be silenced outside working time.
- Staff are encouraged to use an out-of-office message or delayed-send facility where helpful. There is no requirement to install or monitor school email or school apps on a personal device outside working time.

4. Meetings and Parent/Guardian Communication

Meetings should be purposeful, necessary and arranged with reasonable regard to staff working arrangements and contractual obligations. Where a matter can be dealt with efficiently through an appropriate school communication channel, a meeting need not be arranged.

Parents/guardians and other stakeholders have been asked to respect staff working time. Messages received during teaching time may not be read or answered until later that day or on a subsequent working day. Requests for a discussion with a staff member should normally be made through the school office so that a suitable appointment can be arranged.

5. Respectful Communication

All communications should be courteous, proportionate and professional. Abusive, threatening, insulting or persistently inappropriate communications will not be treated as ordinary correspondence and may be referred to the Principal and/or Board of Management and managed under relevant school procedures. Urgent safeguarding or safety concerns will always be dealt with in accordance with the school's statutory responsibilities.

6. Raising a Concern

A staff member who believes that their right to disconnect is not being respected should, where appropriate, raise the matter informally with the Principal. If the concern involves the Principal, it may be raised with the Chairperson of the Board of Management. Unresolved matters may be addressed through the school's applicable grievance procedures and relevant employment procedures. No employee should be penalised for appropriately asserting their right not to routinely engage with work outside normal working hours.

7. Review and Ratification

This policy should be read alongside relevant staff contracts, Department of Education circulars, school communication procedures and health and safety arrangements. The policy will be reviewed as required.