

**A parent’s guide to the Internet**

What is the Internet?

The Internet is a large number of computers all over the world linked together with cables. Inmost cases, each of these computers is also linked locally to

a number of other computers, in a local network. It is

possible for someone using one of these computers to

access information on any of the other computers. It is

possible for other people, outside these local networks, to

connect to the Internet by using standard telephone lines

between their computers and those already connected to the

Internet.

What is the World Wide Web?

To make the appearance of information available through the Internet more attractive, and to assist people in finding information more easily, it is now possible for special pages of information to contain text,

colours, and pictures, sound and even video. These pages,

collectively, make up what is known as the World Wide Web

(WWW). Most of these pages include information on the

location of other pages on the WWW, and it is possible to

follow up links between pages with similar or related content.

Moving from one page to another, regardless of where in the

world they might be located, is called browsing, or surfing the

net or web. Many of these Web pages contain information

that may be useful in the classroom, and it is presented in a

way that is often easy to use. Your child’s school may have

its own Web pages on the WWW.

What is Electronic Mail (E-mail)

This is merely a way of sending messages from one person to another via the Internet. Each Internet user has a unique e-mail address

(such as johnny@glasgow.co.uk) and by sending a message

to this address, the recipient can read the message the next

time he or she connects to the Internet. Internet e-mail

addresses are usually provided along with schools’

connection to the Internet.

What are News Groups?

These are collections of messages written for public readership rather than addressed to an individual. Each collection, or group, of

messages is about a particular subject or theme. Individuals

can reply to these messages, and these replies are also

public. In this way it is possible to track a multi-way

conversation about an important issue of the day. At present

there are more than 10,000 different topics available for

discussion, from specialist science research to support

groups for asthma to fans of James Bond movies. Most of

the press concern regarding pornography on the Internet

refers to newsgroups, but they are the easiest for the

School’s Internet providers to police.

What are the dangers of the Internet referred to in the

media?

It is true that there is some material on the Internet

that would be offensive to most people, such as

pornography, racist and fascist material. There is a risk that

pupils using the ICT Systems can access this material if

using the ICT Systems. While the providers of the Glasgow

Schools ICT Systems use state of the art software to try to

block access to such material, this software is not totally

foolproof. The only way to absolutely prevent access to

offensive material is to have a restricted range of WWW

pages available, in which case many of the advantages of

the global and dynamic nature of the Internet may be lost. It

is a feature of the Internet that the information available is

free. An alternative system is to educate pupils and

encourage an acceptable use policy and partnership

between home and school in dealing with the less savoury

side of Internet use.

How can I get more information?

If you have any specific questions please contact the school and ask for the ICT coordinator Mr Tunney.