Copyright and the Internet
Guidelines and policy for use of electronic material on the internet

Copyright and using websites

Under UK law, copyright material published on the internet will generally be protected in the same way as material in other media. Furthermore, each web page may contain several different copyrights if it contains text, music, graphics and so on.

While there are no specific exceptions to copyright material on the internet, many of the exceptions applying to hard-copy materials might also apply, for example fair dealing for the purposes of non-commercial research or private study.

Many websites will include a copyright statement setting out exactly the way in which materials on the site may be used. When using websites in school, students should be encouraged to look for copyright information, so reinforcing their understanding of the importance this issue.

If permitted uses of the material are unclear, it may be necessary to seek permissions directly from the owner of the website. Unless express permission is given, only a download and/or print of a single copy of a webpage should be made under fair dealing provisions. In all cases, copies should be acknowledged as far as is practicable.

To support visually impaired students, the Copyright (Visually Impaired Persons) Act 2002 allows copying of hard copy and digital materials to create an accessible format. This might allow, for example, texts to be copied and enlarged for use with access devices in the classroom. Further information is available from the Copyright Licensing Agency and the RNIB.

Internet users should also be aware that many online resources may have been published illegally without the permission of the copyright owners. Any subsequent use of the materials, such as printing, or copying and pasting, may also be illegal. Remember also that copyright law differs in other countries, which may be particularly relevant if using websites which have been created or are hosted overseas.

Copyright and creating school websites

Copyright plays an important role in protecting original materials that you may post on the internet, for example through the creation of a school or personal website. Remember that copyright will automatically protect any original materials published online, but it is good practice to mark each page with the copyright symbol, name and date. You may also wish to consider putting some guidelines on your website outlining how visitors can use your materials.

If publishing material from other sources you should ensure that you have the express permission of the copyright owner (unless copyright exceptions apply).

Although there is no clear law on hyperlinking, many websites will provide a linking policy outlining how you may link to their site (for example, a link to the homepage only or links to any page within the site, providing you do not frame it within your own site). If in doubt, it is generally good practice and common courtesy to email the owner of the website to which you wish to link.

Plagiarism and the internet

Plagiarism is the theft of ideas and works from another author and passing them off as one's own. Plagiarism is not a new phenomenon but the advent of digital technologies and the philosophy of sharing information across the internet has made such theft far easier to perform and possibly more difficult to uncover. There are numerous 'essay bank' websites offering access to essays for free or for a fee, often encouraging students to submit their own works also.

Students should be aware that plagiarism is not only cheating but where sufficient is copied, an illegal infringement of copyright also constitutes a criminal offence.

JISC (Joint Information Systems Committee) runs a Plagiarism Advisory Service. Although primarily aimed at FE (further education) and HE (higher education), the service aims to raise awareness of plagiarism providing guidance on copyright and data protection issues, educational tools, and links to sources of further information and advice.

There are also a number of software tools available to assist teachers in detecting plagiarism a keyword search for 'plagiarism' on any major search engine will identify several.

Electronic copying

Electronic use and copying are not considered to be the same as photocopying. Consequently, it is not legal to undertake activities such as scanning text or images from a paper original into a computer or posting material from the Web or a student's work onto the school intranet without the express permission of the copyright holder or a digitisation licence (see below). A school which has a CLA photocopying licence is not authorised for any digital use or digital storage. Scanning a short extract of text to make a single paper copy for research or private study may, however, fall within the scope of the fair dealing privilege.

Production of material for the Swavesey School website

The publication of material for staff or pupil use on the Swavesey School website must therefore be content which does not contravene any copyright laws and cannot include material which has been copied from unauthorised sources without permission.