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February 20<sup>th</sup> 2018

Dear Parents,

It has come to our attention that an individual has attempted to send a communication to all the St Brigid's parents containing serious allegations regarding the Wi-Fi installation in the school. Unfortunately, this communication contains some major errors and omissions and I would like to take this opportunity to set the record straight and highlight the steps taken by the Board of Management to address these allegations. In particular, his allegations are that the Wi-Fi in the school is dangerous to the health of our students and staff because

1. the strength of the Wi-Fi signal exceeds recommended levels and
2. the Wi-Fi has been installed incorrectly.

It should be noted that this individual has never provided a shred of evidence to support his claims regarding the excessive strength of the Wi-Fi signal. Indeed, by his own admission, he has never measured the signal strength and his allegations are based on an "educated guess".

Despite this, and at his request, we had the Wi-Fi signal reduced to its lowest setting and arranged to have it turned off between 6 p.m. and 8 a.m. when it is not in use. We also asked our Wi-Fi installers, the IT Group, to re-check the signal strength using appropriate instrumentation, which they did, and confirmed that it was within recommended levels. It should also be noted that the IT Group is on the Department of Education list of recommended installers.

***“We are satisfied that the installation we carried out is in compliance with our framework contract terms. We have also considered the publicly available DES Guidance Document for the provision of wireless network installations, that was issued to schools. This contains guidelines and recommendations for the school to follow and IT Group confirm that the survey and installation we carried out was compliant, with recommendations given in this document.”***

We contacted the Department of Education regarding the use of Wi-Fi in schools and received written confirmation that their position is that the use of Wi-Fi does not pose a health threat. Our query was referred to the PDST Technology in Education and onto the Environmental Radiation Policy Section in the Department of Communications, Climate Action & Environment (DCCAE) who have responsibility for this area. In their response they stated,

***“IT SHOULD BE REMEMBERED THAT EXPOSURE FROM WIFI SYSTEMS IS CONSIDERABLY LESS THAN FROM USING A MOBILE PHONE. “***

***“The Department sees no reason at this time, based on existing scientific research, why WiFi should not continue to be used in schools. This view is widely shared by, among others, the HPA (UK) and Health Canada.”***

Principal: Ms. Máire Costello

Deputy Principal: Ms. Mary Beausang

We also sought and received confirmation from our Wi-Fi installers that all the equipment was installed in line with all current regulations and standards and in accordance with manufacturer's recommendations.

*“Fortinet have confirmed to us that the products we have used in the school are those products that have been used in thousands of other similar installations and are fully compliant to current accepted industry wi-fi standards. The product deployed by ITGroup is CE certified.”*

Copies of this correspondence in full will be posted on the school website shortly.

His communication would suggest that I, as Chairman of the Board of Management, was making decisions on this issue by myself. I can assure you that all decisions and actions taken were made collectively by the entire Board of Management.


This individual has created an email account stbrigidsWiFi@gmail.com. Although it might appear otherwise, please note that this email account has NOTHING to do with St Brigids School.

Considering the seriousness of these unfounded allegations, the implication that the Board of Management did nothing to address them and the reporting of the school to the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) and Comreg by this individual, we have referred this matter to our solicitors.

The health and safety of our pupils and staff is paramount and the Board of Management would never do anything to compromise that position. We have given these allegations serious consideration and taken advice from experts in this field. Resulting from this we are reassured and confident that the **Wi-Fi system in St Brigids does not pose a danger to the health and wellbeing of the pupils and staff.**

Thank you for taking the time to read this and we look forward to your co-operation in the future.

Yours sincerely,

  
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Tom Sherlock  
Chairperson of the BOM