

Mobile Phone and Electronics Policy

Introductory Statement:

This policy was drawn up in response to technological advances, which have seen a significant increase in hand held electronic 'gadgets' amongst the school population over recent years. Its drafting coincided with increased awareness of the dangers of cyberbullying and the potential risks presented by easy access to mobile phones (or any other electronic device which can access the internet).

Rationale:

- The possession and use of mobile phones by school pupils is now extensive, even in the primary school sector. Our core business of teaching and learning needs to be conducted in an environment free from unnecessary distractions, disruptions or cyber activities which mobile phones can involve. Therefore the school strongly discourages the bringing of mobile phones to school by students. The school is prepared to allow mobile phones on the premises but only within the parameters of the policy as stated below.
- Use of mobile phones (particularly with the advent of increasingly sophisticated equipment and camera phones) presents a number of problems, including:
 - Mobile phones can be valuable items and might render a pupil vulnerable to theft
 - Mobile phones (and their cost and level of sophistication - or otherwise) can make pupils objects of envy or disparagement and could have implications with regard to discipline and potential bullying
 - Even when apparently silent, the use of mobiles phones for texting purposes could be potentially undermining of classroom discipline
 - Use of the newer phones with integrated cameras could lead to child protection and data protection issues with regard to inappropriate capture, use or distribution of images
 - Many of the above issues also pertain to I-Pods, Game Boys, PSPs, etc. They can be very intrusive, distracting and antisocial in a school environment.
- Strategies must be put in place to reduce the intrusiveness of unauthorised technology in a school situation
- Some electronic devices may be harmful due to frequent use

- Mobile phones may be used for bullying purposes.

Relationship to School Ethos:

The use of mobile phones and other electronic games could contravene the provision of a safe and secure school environment, conducive to learning - a provision which is central to the mission statement and ethos of Holy Trinity N.S.

Aims:

- To inform all members of our school community about the appropriate use of mobile phones at our school.
- To outline the procedures and processes of this policy.

Internal School Procedures:

The school's Board of Management accepts that it is not realistic to have a policy which prohibits pupils from taking phones to school. Not only would it be impractical to forbid pupils from carrying them, but it is believed that a number of parents would be concerned for health and safety reasons if their child were not allowed to carry a phone to and from school (and might therefore be unable to contact their parents in respect of any situation that might arise.) However, it is the Board's policy to prohibit the unauthorised use by pupils of mobile phones while on school premises, grounds or off-site activities e.g. school swimming, as follows:

Guidelines for Parents and Children:

- The Board discourages (and asks all parents to discourage) pupils from bringing mobile phones to schools on the grounds that they are valuable and may be lost or stolen. Where a pupil does bring a mobile phone to school, the phone must be switched off at the school gate and remain switched off during the school day. It must not be used, for any purpose, on school premises, grounds or during off-site school activities (such as school swimming / sports activities / school tours.)
- Parents are reminded that in cases of a family emergency, the school office remains the first point of contact and can ensure your child is reached quickly, and helped in any appropriate way.
- Where a parent feels that their child having a phone in school is essential they shall advise their child on the regulations governing use of mobile phones in school.
- Where a pupil is found by a member of staff to be using a mobile phone for any purpose, the phone will be confiscated from the pupil and returned only to the parent or guardian. In circumstances where such pupils walk home unaccompanied, the class teacher will make telephone call home to notify parents of the infringement and mobile phone will be handed back to pupil. Parents will be informed that such breaches of school
- The school will not be liable for the replacement of lost, stolen or damaged devices. The school incorporates this policy into the Code of Behaviour and will treat breaches as they would treat any other breach of the Code.

- If a pupil is found taking photographs or video footage with a mobile phone of either other pupils or teachers or sharing inappropriate messages via blue-tooth this will be regarded as a serious offence and disciplinary action will be taken according to the school's Behaviour Policy.
- If images of other pupils or teachers have been taken, the phone will not be returned to the pupil until the images have been removed by the pupil in the presence of a teacher.

It should be noted that it is a criminal offence to use a mobile phone/personal device to menace, harass or offend another person. As such, if action as sanctioned by the School in this regard is deemed ineffective, as with all such incidents, the School may consider it appropriate to involve the Gardaí.

School Trips and Outings:

- Children are not permitted to bring mobile phones with them on school trips and tours.

Guidelines for Staff:

- During teaching time, while on playground duty and during meetings, mobile phones will not be used.
- Group –messaging is used as a communication tool to bring information on school-related matters to the attention of staff. Messaging and use of school administration social media apps will be confined to periods outside class teaching time and as far as possible not too early and not too late.
- In the event of taking school photographs (e.g. for Newsletter or Website), a school camera, rather than personal phone, should be used.

Roles and Responsibilities:

All staffs share in the co-ordination and implementation of this policy.

Evaluation:

This policy is monitored on an ongoing basis and amendments added as new technology comes on stream.

Implementation:

This policy has been ratified by the Board of Management on 14/03/17.

Signed: Mary White Chairperson