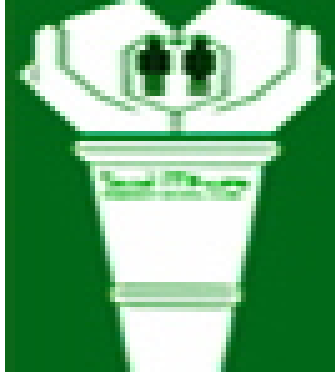


Scoil Mhuire Community School

“Ní bua go fírinne”



MOBILE DEVICE POLICY

The Staff, the Parents' Association, the Student Council and the Board of Management of Scoil Mhuire Community School, amongst others, were consulted during the formation of the policy.

This policy operates within the broader framework of the School Plan and other policies associated therein.

Ratified by Board of Management on: 8th March 2021

Proposed Policy Review date: November 2023

Basic Principles

This policy is a whole school policy that encourages the personal management of mobile devices and obliges the support of all staff, students, parents/guardians, and the Board of Management. The policy is inextricably linked to a number of other policies in our school –

- The Code of Behaviour,
- Anti-Bullying Policy – Cyber Bullying,
- Draft Acceptable Usage Policy,
- Child Safeguarding Statement (and associated policies),
- Data Protection Policy,
- Dignity in the Workplace, etc.

Rationale

“The use of tablet devices and smart phones is now an integral part of the lives of children and young people. While this is a positive development, concerns have been identified including some risks associated with the misuse, abuse and possible overuse of these devices and the various associated technologies.”

DES, Circular 0038/2018

It is no longer regarded as realistic to have a policy which prohibits students from taking phones to school. Not only would it be impractical to forbid students' from carrying them when the latest phones are so slim that they could be hidden easily, but the school understands that at times, where deemed necessary by parents/guardians the possession of a mobile phone can provide a sense of safety and security for students travelling to and from school.

Many of the students' tablet devices and smart phones may be more capable and up to date than some school computers and therefore can support a more student-centred, active learning approach, enabling students to take more responsibility for their own learning.

Within the school environs and in the course of the school day this policy aims to maintain a safe, secure and nurturing environment where the personal dignity and rights of all the members of the school community are preserved and protected.

This policy has also been influenced by the focus on this issue at National policy level. The Department of Education and Skills Circular 0038/2018 emphasises that centrality of this issue to school communities nationwide.

Our Intentions

The school aims to provide a happy, safe supportive and inclusive learning environment for all students.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Clearly set-out and explain the agreed policy regarding access to and use of mobile devices in Scoil Mhuire Community School.
- Ensure that access to mobile device usage does not disrupt this learning environment.
- Support the wellbeing and dignity of all students and all staff.
- Ensure that courtesy to, respect and consideration of others are paramount at all times.
- Clarify the responsibilities of students and staff with regard to mobile phones and the conditions associated with students bringing their mobile phones to school.

“.....young people need to be guided and supported to become good digital citizens. In a school setting, using digital technologies mediated by the teacher with the skills to exploit the potential of the technologies can be invaluable in equipping children with the skills to navigate the online world safely.”

DES, Circular 0038/2018

Mobile Phones

This Policy applies to the entire school campus which includes the school buildings, environs and all school related activities that occur on-site and off-site in the name of the school.

- Mobile phones should preferably be left at home unless requested by a teacher. The school accepts no responsibility for replacing lost, stolen or damaged mobile phones. The safety and security of mobile phones is wholly a matter for students / parents.

Responsibility

It is the responsibility of students who bring mobile phones onto the school premises to adhere to the guidelines outlined in this document.

The decision to provide a mobile phone/electronic device to their children is made by parents / guardians and as such they should be aware if their child takes a mobile phone to school.

Students who have a mobile phone/electronic device at school while under the school's supervision do so according to this policy

Acceptable Use

- When brought to school mobile phones must be switched off stowed away safely. **'Switched off'** does not mean 'Silent', 'Meeting' or any similar mode. **The phone must be powered off, unless being used for educational purposes under the direct instruction of a teacher.**
- Other than when under the direct instruction of a teacher/supervisor in their class or when signing in/out inside the School Office - students are not permitted to access or use mobile phones/devices during the entire school day, inclusive of after school events/study and training. Failure to comply with this policy will result in the confiscation of the device.
 - Mobile phones are not necessary to enable a student to sign in/out electronically. This can be done manually using the tablet in the office.
- In certain classes as pre-arranged by the class teacher when school devices are unavailable, specific teaching and learning or research activities may require access to a personal mobile device. Such access and usage will take place under the clear, focused guidance and supervision of the teacher with defined learning intentions and once that activity is completed students must turn their mobile devices off and stow them away safely.
 - Such access is limited to that specific activity and is governed by the Scoil Mhuire Community School Draft Acceptable Usage Policy.
- Students are not permitted to charge their mobile phone/device in school. Unless, it is a school issued device.
- Our School does not permit the streaming of music through mobile devices at any time in the school day.
- Ear-phones / ear-buds /speakers are not to be used nor are they to be accessed during the school day. Students should store ear-phones and/or ear-buds away in school bags and/or school-jacket pockets once on school premises. Failure to do so will result in the confiscation of these devices.

Parents/Guardians wishing to contact their son/daughter are required to do so by making contact with the school office on 045-868121.

Where your student must leave school during the school day you must submit a "Permission to Leave" note using the school App. **Students must then sign out at the School Office.**

Also, any student, who is feeling unwell at school and needs to go home, must arrange this through the main office. Under no circumstances should students use their mobile phone to contact home and make arrangements to leave except through the School Office.

Confiscated devices/accessories

Confiscated mobile devices/accessories will be held securely on the school premises.

First Offence:

Phones/accessories will be confiscated and kept for two days. Phones will only be returned at 3.45pm/1.15pm as relevant. Students will be able to sign for and reclaim their device/accessory at the School Office. Where this two-day period overlaps with the weekend, the mobile device/accessory will be returned to the student at 1.15pm on Friday.

Second or Subsequent Offences:

Phones/accessories will be confiscated and kept for two weeks. Parents/Guardians will be required to come to the school by appointment and sign for the return of the mobile device/accessory. Students will not be able to reclaim their mobile device/accessory on the second and subsequent offences.

All devices/accessories will be returned to students on the day of all school holidays. i.e. Midterm Breaks, Christmas, Easter & the Summer Holidays.

Any mobile device not claimed within three months will be disposed of.

Any student discovered using a mobile phone/electronic device during school assessments will have their assessment cancelled and the device will be confiscated as outlined above.

School staff will act uniformly in accordance with this policy. **Refusal to hand a mobile device over to a staff member**, on instruction, will be considered a serious breach of the Scoil Mhuire Community School Code of Behaviour and may result in a suspension from school.

It should be noted that it is a criminal offence to use a mobile device to menace, harass or offend another person. As such, the school may consider it appropriate to involve An Garda Síochána in such incidents.

Procedures to follow if a policy breach is identified;

- If addressed by a staff member regarding using/accessing a mobile device/accessory, the student may turn off their phone (the SIM is not permitted to be removed from a confiscated device).
- The device is handed to the teacher/staff member.
- The device is enveloped with the name of student the date/time and the staff member's name clearly recorded on the envelope.
- The device is handed into the School Office, recorded, and stored securely for collection.
- Teachers record this event on CloudSchool.
- Please see the section above "Confiscated devices/accessories" for details on how to reclaim the device/accessory.

POLICY EXTENSION

AUTHORISED SCHOOL BUSINESS (e.g. games, field trips, etc.):

- (a) Photographs cannot be taken, nor can recordings (audio or visual) be made, of a member of the school community without his/her/their expressed permission. Using phones or any other recording devices to record a person without appropriate authorisation, will be considered a serious breach of the School's Code of Behaviour.
- (b) Students will observe positive 'netiquette' (i.e. etiquette on the Internet) in their representation of and comments on members of the school community and about the school itself (refer to the Draft AUP)
- (c) Students will not upload, download, send or forward any material on the Internet that is obscene, defamatory, or intended to annoy or harass a member of the school community.
- (d) No photographs of, or recordings (audio or visual) of, or comments about a member of the school community can be uploaded to the Internet without his/her expressed permission and the permission of the school Principal/Deputy Principals.
- (e) Instances where the Internet is used to insult, offend, slander, defame, harass or bully a member of the school community by another member of the school community is a serious offence and will be treated accordingly. Any student who uses the Internet as a vehicle to insult, offend, harass or bully another student or staff member will be deemed to have committed a serious breach of the School's Code of Behaviour and the school will have recourse to the range of sanctions available. The school may consider it appropriate to involve the Gardaí in such instances.

Serious breaches of the School's Code of Behaviour will be dealt with by the relevant Year Head, and/or the Deputy Principal/Principal and may be reported to the Board of Management.

Important Legislation Supporting the Development of this Policy.

- ✓ General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) May 2018
- ✓ Data Protection Act 1998
- ✓ Data Protection (Amendment) Act 2003
- ✓ Child Trafficking and Pornography Act 1997
- ✓ Interception Act 1993
- ✓ Video Recordings Act 1989
- ✓ Human Rights Act 1998 and the European Convention on Human Rights (if applicable)

APPENDIX 1

Challenges associated with mobile devices;

Use of mobile phones (particularly with the advent of sophisticated equipment and camera phones) presents a number of challenges, including:

Mobile phones/electronic devices can be valuable items and might render a student vulnerable to theft.

Mobile phones/ electronic devices (and their cost and level of sophistication — or otherwise) can make students objects of envy or disparagement and could have implications with regard to discipline and potential bullying.

Disruption to lessons through the receipt and transmission of SMS, and other media messages, telephone ring tones sounding, phone alarms sounding.

Even when apparently silent, the use of mobile phones/electronic devices for messaging purposes could be potentially undermining of classroom discipline.

Use of phones /devices with integrated cameras, sound recording facilities and internet access could lead to child protection and data protection issues with regard to inappropriate capture, use or distribution of images and audio recordings.

Students using mobile phones/electronic devices to cheat in assessments/exams.

Students using vulgar, derogatory, or obscene language while using mobile phones.

Students using mobile phones/electronic devices to menace, harass or offend another person. Students engaging in personal attacks, harassment of another person by posting private information about another person using electronic messages, taking/sending photos, video recording, audio recordings or objectionable images or video recordings, and phone calls (all criminal offenses).

Students posting images, video recordings, audio recordings of other students, staff members, school activities and facilities on the internet.

Students using mobile phones/electronic devices to bully others in the school community.

Privacy concerns mainly related to the ability of many phones to take photographs, make video recordings or record conversations in the ignorance of those being recorded.