

St Oliver Plunkett's NS

Mobile Phone and Smart Device Policy

The spirit of this policy is that pupils should not bring mobile phones to school or to school related off site activities. Pupils who ignore the spirit of this policy and bring a mobile to school, whether they use it or not, will be required to hand over their phone to a member of staff and parents will be asked to collect it from the school office. This policy outlines the appropriate use of mobile phones and smart devices in our school.

Smart devices, limited to Apple Watches/Fitbit, are permitted but must be used in line with this policy and in line with the Acceptable Use Policy.

Rationale

The possession and use of mobile phones/smart devices 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 or disruptions.

1. Use of mobile phones (particularly with the advent of increasingly sophisticated equipment and camera phones) presents a number of problems, including:
2. Mobile phones can be valuable items and might render a pupil vulnerable to theft
3. 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
4. Even when apparently silent, the use of mobiles phones for texting purposes could be potentially undermining of classroom discipline
5. 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
6. Many of the above issues also pertain to smart devices. They can be very intrusive, distracting and antisocial in a school environment.

Aims

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

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 (when the latest phones are so slim that they could be hidden easily), 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 at all (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 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.
- Parents are reminded that in cases of 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 the following will apply:

- An application letter must be submitted to the principal.
- This will be shared with the BOM and considered in exceptional circumstances only.
- Where a pupil does bring a mobile phone to school, the phone must be given to the principal.
- The school or Principal will not be liable for the replacement of lost, stolen or damaged devices.
- Any child found to intentionally have a phone in school without permission or without having handed it to Principal in the morning will have the phone confiscated.
- The phone will not be returned until a parent collects it.
- Where a pupil is found by a member of staff to be using a mobile phone/smart device or other electronic device, as above, for any purpose, the phone/smart device will be confiscated from the pupil and returned only to the parent, guardian or carer.
- 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/smart device of either other pupils or teachers or sharing inappropriate messages via Bluetooth this will be regarded as a serious offence and disciplinary action will be taken according to the school's Discipline Policy.
- If images of other pupils or teachers have been taken, the phone/smart device will not be returned to the pupil until the images have been removed by the pupil in the presence of a teacher.

School Trips and Outings

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

Guidelines for All Staff

- During teaching time, while on playground duty and during meetings, mobile phones will be switched off or put on 'silent' or 'discreet' mode.
- Phones will not be used in sight of children except in the case of emergency. Calls for school business e.g. checking Aladdin, checking a booking for school tour, making arrangements for sporting events etc. should be done on the school phone.
- In very exceptional circumstances (e.g. a car has broken down on route to school and a mechanic has been called) the teacher may, with the permission of the principal, have their phones on for a period. An explanation should be given in this case.
- Staff can use their personal mobile phones to contact parents when caller ID is hidden. There have been occasions where teachers who have used their phones in good faith have subsequently received crank calls.
- Staff may use phones for educational purposes only e.g. music, timers

Ratified by the BOM

Date: 28.09.2023

Chairperson: Sheila Macken

Secretary: Mairéad Murphy