

Scoil Bhride Mobile Phone and Electronic Devices Policy

Introduction and Rationale

Our Mobile Phone and Electronic Device Policy outlines how our school seeks to promote best practices regarding using mobile phones and electronic devices.

While we appreciate that school pupils now possess and use mobile phones and other electronic devices extensively, we also believe that to optimise teaching and learning; we must ensure that the learning environment is free from unnecessary distractions or disruptions related to using mobile phones and personal electronic devices.

While we are committed to ensuring our students are provided with essential opportunities to develop fundamental skills in the use of the internet, digital technologies and electronic devices (as outlined in the school Acceptable Use Policy (AUP)), we are also aware of the potential dangers associated with overuse of mobile phones and personal electronic devices i.e.

- 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.
- The use of phones with integrated cameras could lead to child protection and data protection issues regarding the inappropriate capture, use, or distribution of images, sound, and videos.
- Many of the above issues also pertain to iPads, tablets, portable gaming devices, smartwatches and other electronic devices. They can be very intrusive, distracting and anti-social in a school environment

As a school that seeks to develop all our students holistically, we feel that this policy, in conjunction with our Acceptable Use Policy, outlines how we can effectively develop our students' capacity to function competently and safely in an increasingly digital world while ensuring opportunities for physical and social development are not interfered with by overexposure to mobile phones and electronic devices.

Aims:

This Mobile Phone and Electronic Device Policy aims to;

- Ensure that pupils will benefit from learning opportunities offered by electronic resources safely and effectively.
- Inform all members of our school community about the appropriate use of electronic devices and mobile phones at our school
- Minimise intrusions and distractions to children's learning during the school day.
- Ensure that everyone in the school community understands their roles and responsibilities regarding mobile phone and electronic device use in the school.

Children's School Use of Personal Mobile Phones and Electronic Devices

The following procedures have been put in place to ensure minimal and safe usage of mobile phones and electronic devices in our school;

- The use of personal mobile phones and other personal devices by children attending school is not permitted while they are under the care of school staff, whether on school premises, during school trips, or when involved in extracurricular activities. Therefore, children should not bring mobile phones and other personal devices to school or when participating in school-related activities.
- Children who need to contact home during school hours may do so through the school secretary using the school landline phone (091-525052).
- Parents are reminded that the school office is the first point of contact in emergencies. The school can ensure that your child is reached promptly and that a message is passed on to them.
- If a parent believes it is essential for their child to have a phone at school, the following conditions will apply:
 - ✓ Parents and children must sign a Mobile Phone and Electronic Devices Permission Form (Appendix 1). This form will be submitted to the school Principal, who will sign it and present it to the Board of Management. The Board will decide whether permission is granted. Permission must be sought annually.
 - ✓ Mobile phones and electronic devices must be switched off at the school gate before the child enters in the morning and must remain off until the child exits the school gate in the evening.
 - ✓ The phone or electronic device must be stored in the pupil's bag.
 - ✓ Mobile phones and electronic devices cannot be used at any point, for any reason, during the school day.
 - ✓ Mobile phones and electronic devices can't be taken on any school trip outside the school.
 - ✓ The school accepts no liability for lost, stolen, or damaged phones while on the school premises or grounds.
 - ✓ For identification purposes, the child's name must be attached to the back of the phone.

School Trips and Outings

- Children cannot bring mobile phones or electronic devices on school trips and outings.
- Teachers will have a contact number for each parent if it is necessary to contact a parent/guardian.
- Children may not bring cameras with them on school trips and tours. Staff will document these activities.
- Any pupil found using a mobile phone, electronic device, or camera during after-school activities or on school trips will have the devices confiscated. These devices will only be returned when a parent or guardian collects them from the Principal. This will be considered Stage 3 Orange Form incident, and appropriate sanctions will apply as per the school's Code of Behaviour.

Personal Guidelines for Staff:

- All staff can have their phones on during the school day in case of an emergency.
- While in class, staff should only use their phones for purposes related to teaching and learning or for issues of a genuinely important personal nature.

- For professional reasons, casual phone use for other non-educational reasons is strongly discouraged.
- Personal calls, texts and browsing should be confined to break times.
- Staff are advised not to use their own phones when conducting school business and to keep their personal mobile phone number and social networking sites private.

Guidelines for Teachers

Teachers will;

- Follow the guidelines outlined in the Sanctions section below.
- Discuss all aspects of this policy with all children.
- Have a list, provided by the Principal, of children in their class who have permission from the Board of Management to bring a mobile phone and/or an electronic device to school.

Guidelines for the Principal

The Principal will;

- Follow the guidelines outlined in the Sanctions section below.
- Ensure that all staff and parents have a copy of the Mobile Phone and Electronic Devices Policy.
- Ensure that a copy of the policy is published on the school website.
- Oversee a biannual review of the policy.
- Keep an up-to-date list of children with BOM permission to have a mobile phone or electronic device in school. He/she will give this list to class teachers.
- Ensure that all support structures listed below are put in place.

Guidelines for Parents

- Staff and BOM recognise parents as the child's primary educator and believe that parents have an important role to play in ensuring their child's appropriate and safe use of electronic devices
- Parents and guardians are encouraged to regularly check their child's online activity / digital footprint. They are also encouraged to check social media apps on mobile phones and electronic devices to ensure they are aware of their child's online interaction with others and approve of it.
- Parents/guardians are encouraged to talk with their children regularly about their use of mobile phones and electronic devices, discuss who their child is interacting with, and discuss the content of such interactions.
- Parents and guardians are asked to encourage their children to make bedrooms a "device-free" zone to ensure they get a break from online activity and get satisfactory sleep.
- Parents are asked to attend internet safety talks held in the school.
- If parents would like their child to have a mobile phone in their possession during school time, they must ask permission from the Board of Management by submitting a Mobile Phone and Electronic Devices Permission Form.
- If a child's mobile or electronic device is confiscated in school, parents must collect it from the Principal

Sanctions

| Scenario | Action |
|---|---|
| A child has a phone or an electronic device in school without a signed Mobile Phone and Electronic Devices Permission Form and approval from the BOM; | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The phone or device will be confiscated by the class teacher and given to the Principal. The device may only be retrieved by a parent or guardian. The Principal will inform the child's parents. This will be considered to be a Stage 3 Orange form offence. Disciplinary action will be taken in accordance with the school's Code of Behaviour/Anti-Bullying Policy. |
| A child has a mobile/electronic device turned on inside the school gates; | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The phone or device will be confiscated by the class teacher and given to the Principal. The device may only be retrieved by a parent or guardian. The Principal will inform the child's parents. This will be considered to be a Stage 3 Orange Form offence. Disciplinary action will be taken in accordance with the school's Code of Behaviour/Anti-Bullying Policy. |
| A child brings a mobile phone/electronic device on a school trip outside the school. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The phone or device will be confiscated by the class teacher and given to the Principal. The device may only be retrieved by a parent or guardian. The Principal will inform the child's parents. This will be considered to be a Stage 3 Orange Form offence. Disciplinary action will be taken in accordance with the school's Code of Behaviour/Anti-Bullying Policy. |
| A teacher has reason to suspect that a pupil has used a mobile phone or personal device to take photographs, video footage, or audio recordings of other pupils or staff members. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The phone or electronic device will be confiscated and given to the Principal. It will not be returned to the pupil until the pupil has deleted the content in the presence of the Principal and the child's parents. The principal will inform the child's parents. This will be considered to be a Stage 4 Red Form offence. Disciplinary action will be taken in accordance with the school's Code of Behaviour/Anti-Bullying Policy. |
| A child/children use mobile phones or electronic devices to bully other children or send offensive messages/calls outside school that impact a child/children in school; | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school will investigate the issue. Parents of all the children involved will be notified by the child's/children's class teacher. This will be considered a Stage 3 Orange Form offence. Disciplinary action will be taken in accordance with the school's Code of Behaviour/Anti-Bullying Policy. |
| A child is suspected of using a mobile phone or personal device to menace, harass, or offend another person; | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is a criminal offence, and the school reserves the right to involve the Gardai. The Principal will inform the child's parents. This will be considered a Stage 4 Red Form offence. Disciplinary action will be taken in accordance with the school's Code of Behaviour/Anti-Bullying Policy. |
| There is a suspicion that the material on a confiscated mobile phone or electronic device may provide evidence of a criminal offence; | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Principal reserves the right to hand the phone over to the Gardai for further investigation. The Principal will inform the child's parents. This will be considered a Stage 4 Red Form offence. Disciplinary action will be taken in accordance with the school's Code of Behaviour/Anti-Bullying Policy. |

Digital Devices & Anti-Bullying

Parents should note that our Anti Bullying Policy currently states:

“In the context of this policy, placing a once-off offensive or hurtful message, image or statement on a social network site or other public forum where that message, image or statement can be heard or viewed by other people will be regarded as bullying behaviour.”

Legislation

The school will provide information on the following legislation relating to the use of electronic devices, which teachers, students and parents should familiarise themselves with:

- Data Protection (Amendment) Act 2003
- Child Trafficking and Pornography Act 1998
- Interception Act 1993
- Video Recordings Act 1989
- The Data Protection Act 1988

Support Structures

The school will establish support structures to ensure the appropriate use of electronic devices in school and that staff, parents, and pupils feel supported in using them.

- The school will provide educational talks and information for pupils, parents, and staff to educate them on the risks associated with mobile phones, tablets, or internet-enabled devices—such as cyberbullying, social media security, and harmful content.
- The school will provide Internet Safety and Cyber Bullying talks for pupils in 4th to 6th classes.
- The school will offer Internet Safety and Cyber Bullying talks for all parents and guardians.
- Internet Safety Day will be celebrated annually.
- Community Gardaí will collaborate with classes regarding Internet Safety and Cyber Bullying.
- Staff will regularly engage in Continuous Professional Development concerning the AUP, Internet Safety, and Cyber Bullying.
- The school will inform students and parents about key support structures and organisations that address illegal material or the harmful use of the Internet.
- The school incorporates this policy into the Code of Behaviour and the Acceptable Use Policy. It will address breaches like any other violation of these policies.

Review Procedure

Staff and the Board of Management will review the policy every two years or when procedures need to be adjusted. The next review will occur during the 2026-2027 school year.

Ratification of Policy:

The Board of Management ratified this policy on _____.

Signed Chairperson Board of Management: _____

Date: _____

Signed Principal: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 1

Mobile Phone and Electronic Device Permission form

I would like to seek permission for my child to have a mobile phone /electronic device in his/her possession while in school.

| Child's Name | Child's Class | Child's Class Teacher |
|--------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| | | |

I am looking for this permission for the following reasons;

I have read and understand all the terms in the following school policies.

- Mobile Phone and Electronic Devices Policy
- Acceptable Usage Policy
- Code of Behaviour

By signing this, I agree to all terms in all three aforementioned policies.

I confirm that my child and I, as a parent/guardian, have read and clearly understand our responsibilities regarding these policies and are aware that sanctions may occur due to breaches of these policies.

Student Signature: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Principal's Signature _____

Date: _____

