

Mobile Phone and Personal Electronic Device Policy

Introduction:

The following policy has been adopted by the Board of Management of Our Lady of Mercy SNS & Holy Family JNS. It should be read in conjunction with the school's Code of Behaviour and Anti Bullying measures and procedures. The policy is the result of whole staff collaboration together with Parent Council liaison. Personal Electronic devices include Smart Watches/ Fitbits with recording or social media capacities, Kindles, ipads, MP3 players, gameboys and ipods.

Rationale:

Instances of bullying, offensive messaging and the inappropriate use of camera and video by phone have been highlighted on a national level. Thus the school management are proactive in ensuring the safety and welfare of all members of the school community. Mobile phones (and their cost/level of sophistication can make pupils objects of envy or disparagement. Use of phones with integrated cameras and internet connection can lead to child protection and data protection issues with regard to inappropriate capture, use and distribution of images.

Aims:

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

To lessen intrusions on and distractions to children's learning and to protect the anxiety levels and mental health and wellbeing of our pupils.

To enhance the levels of safety and security we can provide for our pupils and to highlight the intrusion on teaching and learning time that ensues when pupils arrive in school upset over events posted out of school hours on platforms that are inappropriate for the age group.

That parents/guardians are aware of the necessity to supervise children while using social media as neglecting to do so may become a welfare and child protection concern for school management.

School Procedures:

The use of mobile phones/electronic devices by children who attend the school is not allowed while the children are in the care of the school staff, while at school, on trips from the school or involved in extra curricular activities. The children should therefore not bring mobile phones and other personal devices to school or when engaging in school related activities.

Mobile phones/electronic devices that are found in the school should be handed into the school office. Failure to do so will result in the sanctions outlined below.

The school holds no responsibility replacing/repairing devices lost/damaged or stolen on school grounds or on external school visits.

Children who need to contact home during school hours may do so through the school office staff using the school landline phone. In cases of emergency, the school office remains the first point of contact. Office staff can ensure that children/parents are reached quickly and a message passed onto them.

In the very rare event that a parent thinks that their child having a phone in school is essential, the following will apply:

The parent must send the Principal a letter requesting that their child be permitted to bring her mobile phone to school. The letter will be kept on file. The phone should be clearly labelled on the back or in a transparent ziplock bag with the child's name and classroom number clearly written on it.

The phone must never be brought to class. It must be turned off before the pupil enters the yard and handed into the Office immediately the pupil enters the building, after the bell rings. The child may collect it at the end of the day. It must not be turned on until the pupil leaves the school gates.

Sanctions:

Any child found to intentionally have a phone/personal electronic device in school without parental letter, or without having handed it into the office in the morning will have the phone confiscated until a parent/guardian collects it.

Where a pupil is found by a member of staff to be using a mobile phone/electronic device for any purpose, it will be confiscated from the pupil and returned only to the parent/guardian the following day.

In the event of a second offence the phone will be confiscated for three days. Further breaches of the policy will be addressed at the discretion of the Principal and/or Board of Management and a phone may be confiscated for a period of five consecutive days.

The school incorporates this policy into the Code of Behaviour and Acceptable Use Policy and will treat breaches in the same manner as any other breaches of these policies.

If a pupil uses a device during school hours to take photographs, video footage or recording of other pupils or staff members or shares inappropriate messages via

Bluetooth or other methods, this will be recorded as serious unacceptable behavior and disciplinary action will be taken in accordance with the school's Code of Behaviour.

All images of pupils or teachers taken during school hours must be removed by the pupil in the presence of the Principal or class teacher in the event of the Principal being unavailable.

It should be noted that it is a very serious offense to use an electronic device to menace, harass or offend another person. This would include personal attacks, posting private information about another person or circulating objectionable images. The principal may consider it appropriate to involve the Gardaí should the above happen during school hours.

School Trips and Outings:

Children are not permitted to bring mobile phones with them on school trips and tours. Teachers will have a contact number in the event that it is necessary to make contact with parents/guardians. This is in accord with the school tour policy for communication procedures in the event of emergencies.

Mobile Phone use by Teachers/SNAs

While staff may have mobile phones at their place of work, the receiving and making of 'social' calls during class time is prohibited.

In the event of a staff member having to take an emergency call during school time, they should step outside of the classroom.

All other calls should be conducted during appointed break times only.

Teachers are asked to be responsible for their own property by ensuring that phones etc are kept in a safe place and not visible to pupils during the school day.

Staff are to use the school phone to conduct school business, except in the most exceptional cases.

Evaluation:

This policy is monitored annually and amended if deemed necessary.

Ratification:

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 24th October 2022

Signed

Date **24.10.2022**

Sean Dower

Chairperson of Board of Management