



Mobile Phone and Electronic Games 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. The possession and use of these is now extensive and presents a number of problems, including:

- i. Mobile phones and electronic gadgets can be valuable items and might render a pupil vulnerable to theft;
- ii. Mobile phones can make pupils objects of envy or disparagement and could have implications with regard to discipline and potential bullying
- iii. The use of mobile phones for texting purposes could be potentially undermining of classroom management
- iv. Use of phones with integrated cameras could lead to child protection and data protection issues with regard to inappropriate capture, use or distribution of content

Rationale:

- iPods, mobile phones, Game Boys, PSPs, MP3s etc. are intrusive and distracting 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 to conduct bullying campaigns

Relationship to School Ethos:

The use of mobile phones and other electronic games contravenes the provision of a safe and secure school environment and is not conducive to learning - a provision which is central to the mission statement and ethos of Scoil Mhuire

Internal School Procedures:

The following are the guidelines for mobile phone/electronic games usage in the school;

- Children are not allowed to use mobile phones/electronic games during school hours (see below)
- Children who need to contact home during school hours may do so through the school secretary using the school landline phone
- Any pupil who brings a mobile phone or electronic game to school risks having it confiscated and not returned until the school day is over
- Staff have access to the school landline if urgent calls need to be made to parents
- Classroom supervision will be organised if a class teacher has to contact other professionals or outside agencies in relation to a particular child

- Staff personal calls are normally confined to break times. In cases of urgency, staff members should use discretion in making calls and ensure that their class is supervised during the call. Incoming personal calls should be reserved for urgent matters.

Children's Phones

- Generally, children are discouraged from bringing mobile phones and electronic games to school. In exceptional circumstances, such as when out of school activities and after school games are scheduled, school tours etc., children may be allowed carry a phone as parents may need to be contacted. Occasionally the children may also be allowed to bring in electronic games as a treat – e.g. the day of the Christmas holidays
- If, at the request of parents, a child takes a mobile phone to school, it must be switched off and handed up to the teacher as soon as the child enters the classroom
- The teacher returns the mobile phone to the child at home time. However it is the responsibility of the child to remember to collect the phone
- Pupils who are obliged to carry a mobile phone must switch it off on entering the school grounds in the morning
- Pupils are forbidden to switch their phone back on until they leave the school grounds after school
- Pupils who ignore this policy and are found with their phones switched on will be dealt with according to the Code of Behaviour
- If a teacher or staff member has a suspicion that a mobile phone has unsuitable material stored on it, the pupil will be asked to hand over the phone to the teacher or the school principal. The child's parents will be contacted and will have to collect the phone from the school
- Where there is evidence that the material on the phone may provide evidence relating to a criminal offence, the phone will be handed over to the Gardaí for further investigation and the parents will be informed
- The school accepts no responsibility for replacing lost, stolen or damaged mobile phones
- Pupils should mark their phones clearly with their name
- Mobile phones which are found in the school without a name must be handed to a member of staff immediately
- It is strongly advised that pupils have passwords/pin numbers to ensure that unauthorised phone calls cannot be made from their phones. These pins and passwords must be kept confidential
- Pupils who use mobile phones to bully other pupils or to send offensive messages or to make offensive calls will face disciplinary actions as per the school's Code of Behaviour
- The same applies to pupils who take unauthorised photos or recordings of other students or staff members
- It is a criminal offence to use a mobile phone to menace, harass or offend another person. As such, if action as sanctioned by the school in this regard is ineffective, as with all incidents, the school may consider it necessary to involve the Gardaí.

Roles and Responsibilities:

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

Evaluation:

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

Implementation:

This policy was last reviewed and updated in Dec 2012.