

Mobile Phone and Personal Electronic Device Policy

Introduction and Rationale

The possession and use of mobile phones by school students is now extensive, even in the primary school sector. The use of mobile phones and personal devices (iPods, Game Boys, PSPs, MP3s etc.) presents a number of problems that can prove intrusive and distracting in a school environment. They can be used to cause discipline problems or as a means of bullying others. The capacity of many devices to take photographs, make video or sound recordings could lead to child protection and data protection issues with regard to inappropriate capture, use or distribution of images. In order to manage the issue of mobile phones, and other personal devices, this policy has been reviewed.

Relationship to Our School Ethos

The use of mobile phones and other electronic devices contravenes the provision of a safe and secure school environment and is not conducive to learning - a provision that is central to the mission statement and ethos of Our Lady Queen of the Apostles National School.

Aim of Policy

School Management is introducing a policy that prohibits the use by students of mobile phones, and other personal devices, while on school premises or involved in school activities such as tours, trips or extra-curricular activities. This is in order to create a safer environment and to lessen intrusions on, and distractions to, children's learning.

School Procedures

- The use of mobile phones 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 that are found in the school should be handed to the School Office.
- Children who need to contact home during school hours may do so through the School Secretary using the School landline phone.
- Parents are reminded that in cases of emergency, the School Office remains the first point of contact and can ensure that your child is reached quickly and a message passed onto them.

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

- Parents must send the Principal a letter requesting that their child be permitted to bring his/her mobile phone to school. One letter per school

term. The letter should be addressed to the Principal. This letter will be kept on file.

- All phones brought to school must have a sticky label on the back with the child's name and classroom number written clearly on it.
- The phone must be turned off and handed to the Principal at the start of the school day. The Principal will keep the phone locked away until the end of the school day.

Sanctions

- Any child found to intentionally have a phone in school without parental letter or without having handed it to the Principal in the morning will have the phone confiscated. The phone will not be returned until a parent/guardian/carer collects it. Similarly, the use of all personal electronic devices is not permitted during the school day – this includes arrival, class time, breaks and dismissal.
- Where a pupil is found by a member of staff to be using a mobile phone or other personal device for any purpose, it will be confiscated from the pupil and returned only to the parent/guardian/carer.
- The School will not be liable for replacing mobile phones or other devices that are lost, stolen or damaged.
- The School incorporates this policy into the Code of Behaviour and Discipline and Acceptable Use Policy, and will treat breaches in the same manner as any other breach of these Policies.
- If a pupil uses a mobile phone or personal device 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 regarded as serious unacceptable behaviour, or very serious unacceptable behaviour, and disciplinary action will be taken in accordance with the School's Discipline Policy.

It should be noted that it is a criminal offence to use a mobile phone/personal device to menace, harass or offend another person. As such, if action as sanctioned by the School in this regard is deemed ineffective, as with all such incidents, the School may consider it appropriate to involve the Gardaí.

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 a parent/guardian.