



Scoil Áine Naofa, Loch Cútra

Mobile Phone and Electronic Devices Policy

Introduction

This policy outlines the appropriate use of mobile phones and electronic devices in our school. It was reviewed during the 2019/2020 school year in conjunction with a review of our code of behaviour and anti-bullying policy. It is envisaged that this document will clarify the school policy in relation to the use of devices for staff/parents/guardians and pupils.

Rationale

The possession and use of mobile phones by school pupils is now extensive, even in the primary school sector. Use of mobile phones (particularly with the advent of increasingly sophisticated equipment and camera phones) presents a number of problems, including being a distraction to learning, causing discipline problems or a method of bullying, to menace, harass or offend another person. There are also privacy concerns mainly related to the ability of many phones/devices to take photographs, make video or audio recordings or access the internet. This could lead to child protection and data protection issues with regard to inappropriate capture, use or distribution of images. In addition, mobile phones/electronic devices can be valuable items and might render a pupil vulnerable to theft.

Aims

This policy aims

- To inform all members of our school community about the appropriate use of mobile phones/electronic devices at our school.
- To outline the procedures and processes of in relation to mobile phones/electronic devices.

Relationship to the characteristic spirit of the school

Loch Cútra NS strives to provide a school environment where all children are secure and protected. The use of mobile phones and other electronic devices can contravene the provision of a safe and secure school environment and is not conducive to learning.

Content

Guidelines for pupils

General

Children are forbidden from bringing a mobile phone/electronic device to school

- Parents are reminded that in cases of emergency, pupils can be contacted through the school office at any time.
- Children wishing to contact home may do so using the school phone with the permission of their teacher/principal.

Exceptional Circumstances

In rare and exceptional circumstances a parent may feel that it is essential for their child to have a phone in school. In such cases 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. The letter should state the reason for this request and state the dates in question. This letter, if approved should be kept on file.
- Where a pupil is granted permission to bring a mobile phone to school the phone must remain switched off during the school day and may not be used, for any purpose on school premises, grounds or during off-site school activities (such as school swimming or sports activities).
- All phones brought to school must have a label at the back with their child's name and class.
- The phones must be switched off and handed up to the office at the start of the school day. Phones will be stored in the office until the end of the school day.

Without permission

- Any pupil who unintentionally brings a phone to school without permission should ensure it is switched off and inform their teacher. The phone will be retained in the office and returned to the pupil at the end of the school day. However, if this happens repeatedly the phone will be confiscated and the phone will not be returned until a parent/guardian collects.
- Any pupil found to intentionally have a phone in school without permission and without having informed their teacher will have their phone confiscated. The phone will not be returned until a parent/guardian collects it.

Points to note

- The school will not be liable for the replacement of lost, stolen or damaged devices.
- Mobile phones found in the school and whose owner cannot be located should be handed to a member of staff.
- The school incorporates this policy into the Code of Behaviour and will treat breaches as they would any other breach of the Code.

- If a pupil is found taking photographs or video footage with a mobile phone of either other pupils or staff, or sharing/showing inappropriate messages or pictures via Bluetooth (or other methods) or in person this will be regarded as a serious offence and disciplinary action will be taken according to the school's Discipline Policy.
- If images/recordings of other pupils or staff have been taken, the phone will not be returned to the pupil until images have been removed by the pupil in the presence of a teacher.
- Pupils found using mobile phones to bully other pupils or send/show offensive messages/calls/pictures will face disciplinary action and as per the school Code of Behaviour/anti-bullying policy.
- It should be noted that 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 deemed ineffective, as with all incidents, the school may consider it appropriate to involve the Gardaí.
- If a teacher has any suspicion that a mobile phone has unsuitable material stored on it, pupils will be required to hand over the phone to a teacher and parents will be asked to collect it from the school. Where there is a suspicion that the material on the mobile may provide evidence relating to a criminal offence the phone will be handed over to the Gardaí for further investigation. Parents will be informed in such circumstance.
- It is strongly advised that pupils use passwords/pin numbers to ensure that authorised phone calls cannot be made on their phones (eg by other pupils or if stolen). Pupils must keep their password/pin numbers confidential. Mobile phones and/or passwords should not be shared.
- The school feels that it is never necessary for other electronic devices to be brought to school.

School Trips and Outings

- Children are not permitted to bring mobile phones/electronic devices with them on school trips and tours.
- Teachers will carry their mobile phones in case of emergency.
- Parents/Guardians will be relayed information updates e.g. collection times, by text message to the number provided by parents.

Guidelines for Staff Mobile Phones

- During teaching time, while on playground duty and during meetings, mobile phones will be switched off or put on 'silent' mode.
- Phones will not be used in sight of children except in the case of an emergency. Pupils will not be given access to staff mobile phones. Calls for school business e.g. contacting parents, checking a booking for school tour, making arrangements for sporting events etc. should be done on the school phone, out of teaching instruction hours.
- In very exceptional circumstances (e.g. a serious family illness) the teacher/staff member may, with the permission of the principal, have their phones on for a period.

- Staff members should not give out their phone number or that of any other staff member to pupils or parents/guardians.

Parents/Guardians and Visitors

We request that parents/guardians and visitors to the school do not use their mobile phones to make or receive calls while on the school premises.

Any person wishing to contact a member of staff regarding school business should ring the school telephone, not personal mobiles.

Roles and Responsibilities

- The Principal has overall responsibility for the implementation and review of the policy.
- The implementation and monitoring of this policy will be the responsibility of all staff who will endeavour to uphold its aims and follow the procedures as stated above.
- It is the responsibility of Parents/Guardians to encourage their children to behave in an appropriate manner and to adhere to the rules of the school.
- The BOM will ensure that a copy of this policy is available upon request.

Success Criteria

Indicators of success include:

- Positive feedback from teachers, parents/guardians and pupils. This may be monitored at staff meetings, parent/teacher meetings and in class discussion time.
- Fewer incidents of phones/devices being confiscated.

Implementation and Review

This policy is effective from December 2019. It will be reviewed in during the school year 2021/2022.

Ratification

This policy was ratified by the BOM.

Signed:

Chairperson BOM

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Principal

Date: