



13th December 2024

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I hope this letter finds you well and you are looking forward to a relaxing Christmas break. As you are aware over the past number of months we have been reviewing and updating our school policy around mobile phones. This is as a result of a directive to all schools to introduce a ban on mobile phones during the school day (please see below). The following actions have taken place over the past number of months

1. Engagement with Board of Management and Teaching staff
2. Establishment of a working group to review
3. Engagement with students in Classes and via Student Council
4. Engagement with Parents Council

Through the above, many issues have been raised and solutions developed. We acknowledge that some of the issues will be challenging for our community, and we will continue to keep them under review. The outcomes of the process are outlined below, and this policy will be implemented from the 6th of January.

1. The Code of Positive Behavior and Acceptable User Policy has been updated to reflect the new policy.

All mobile phones must be turned off and placed out of sight for the entire school day including Evening/Saturday study. Students are not permitted to have their phones powered on upon arrival to school, at break/lunch time and are not permitted to use their phones during class time.

2. Development of a student version of the rule for display around the school.
3. A number of presentations have been delivered to all students around the new rule including a clear explanation of steps under the code of behaviour for breaches of the rule.
4. Steps in place to ensure learning with ICT is developed and enhanced.

Communication with the school will continue to be facilitated during the school day through phone, email and by presenting to the school. **As students will not have access to their phone during the school day, parents/guardians are reminded that if they need to contact their son/daughter, please use the school office.** We acknowledge that this may be a change in practice for parents/guardians, but your co-operation is requested.

If you have any questions or would like any further clarifications, please contact the school at any time

With kind regards

Paul Fogarty

Principal

Martina Butler

Deputy Principal



28th August 2024.

Dear Principal and Chair of the Board of Management,

I write to express my gratitude to you and your staff and the entire school community for the work you are doing and also to wish you every success in the year ahead.

As you will be aware, I recently announced my intention to instruct schools to implement a ban on the use of mobile phones during the school day, both in primary and post-primary schools.

This policy approach is based on the growing concerns expressed about the impact of the use of mobile phones during the school day, including the potential for distraction during class time, the risk of accessing inappropriate content and cyberbullying, and the potential for decreased social interaction with peers.

It is recognised that many schools already have well-developed and managed policies in place in this area currently and this initiative will build on that foundation. I commend schools for the time and attention given to this in recent years. In some schools, there will be no material change, whereas for other schools this ban provides a supportive framework to enable them to implement more stringent policies.

This initiative will build on the “Keeping Childhood Smartphone Free” policy which is aimed at children in primary school. There has already been a strong take-up of the voluntary agreements among parents not to buy smartphones for their children while they are in primary school. The “Keeping Childhood Smartphone Free” policy has also been supported by all of Ireland’s leading mobile phone network operators.

Schools are best placed to determine the specific approach and policy required to achieve a school day that is free from mobile phone use by students. I am asking that schools consult with their students and parents in developing the approach that is best suited to their own circumstances. This may include consideration of the use of lockers, cubbies, or allowing phones to be stored in the students’ bags switched off during the school day or whatever the school may deem appropriate.

The policy ultimately developed should advise that parents and guardians can continue to contact or leave messages for their children through the school office in the usual manner for specific circumstances such as family emergencies or medical appointments. Parents and guardians can also permit their children to carry and access their phones during travel to and from school.

The policy should provide for those who need access to their mobile phone for specific reasons and in accordance with existing policy, for example, students with diabetes might use continuous glucose monitoring with a sensor linked to their mobile phone to monitor blood sugar levels.

It is important to note that the use of tablets, computers and laptops will still be supported and indeed encouraged, provided they are used under the direct guidance



of a staff member in the context of teaching and learning and in line with the school's Acceptable Use Policy and Digital Learning Plan.

Webwise, the Irish Internet Safety Awareness Centre funded by the Department of Education and co-funded by the European Commission will continue to provide supports to schools to help educate students about online safety, including:

- Acceptable Use policy information, including an Acceptable Use Policy Generator which is free for all schools to use. The easy to use tool allows schools to customise an Acceptable Use Policy based on your school needs.
- Advice for teachers including classroom videos, a parent's hub including app explainers, and a youth hub including information videos.

A suite of professional learning resources will also be made available to schools to support them in their work to prevent and address bullying behaviour.

Further guidance will issue in due course to support school communities in implementing this new policy during the 2024/2025 school year.

The conversation that has been started about the use of mobile phones in schools will also, I hope, stimulate national discourse that will support parents to examine related matters with their children and to agree an approach that is appropriate for their unique family and home circumstances.

With gratitude and good wishes for the school year ahead,

Norma Foley TD
Minister for Education