



St. Mark's Boys National School

Mobile Phone and Smart Devices Policy

Introduction: This policy was devised in 2022, in accordance with the DES Circular 0038/2018 and the Addendum to the Child Protection, Children First document 2019. It was drafted in consultation with staff and as a review and update to our previous Mobile Phone Policy which was ratified by the Board of Management in 2016.

Rationale: The purpose of this policy is to acknowledge the benefits of mobile phones and smart devices, but to also highlight the risks associated with their use and to provide guidance to the school community for such. The promotion of digital technologies for teaching, learning and assessment is a priority of the Department of Education and Skills. Research shows that digital technologies can play a positive role in supporting high quality teaching, learning and assessment. The use of tablet devices and smartphones is now an integral part of the lives of children and young people. The school's Digital Learning Plan and Acceptable Usage Policy outlines how digital technologies will be used in the school to enhance teaching, learning and assessment. However, concerns have been identified including some risks associated with the misuse, abuse and possible overuse of these devices. Children and young people need to be guided and supported to become good digital citizens. Some potential challenges/risks associated with the use of mobile phones and smart devices include:

- Use of mobile phones and smart devices with integrated cameras could lead to child protection and data protection issues with regard to inappropriate capture, use or distribution of images.
- Mobile phones and smart devices can be valuable items and could potentially be damaged in school or may render a pupil vulnerable to theft.
- Mobile phones and smart devices may make pupils objects of envy or disparagement and could have implications with regard to discipline and potential bullying.
- Mobile phones and other smart devices can be very intrusive, distracting and antisocial when used in a school environment.

Aims and Objectives: The aim of this policy is:

1. to inform all members of our school community about the appropriate use of mobile phones and smart devices at our school.
2. to outline the procedures and processes associated with this policy.

Definition of Smart Devices: A smart device is an electronic device, generally connected to other devices or networks via different wireless protocols such as Bluetooth, NFC, Wi-Fi, LiFi, 3G, etc. Examples of smart devices include but are not limited to iPods, iPads, tablets, mobile phones, smart watches, digital cameras, Kindles and gaming devices.

Guidelines: The Mobile Phone & Smart Devices Policy is consistent with the school's Code of Good Behaviour, Anti-Bullying, Child Safeguarding, Data Protection and Acceptable Usage Policies. Any inappropriate use of mobile phones and/or smart devices (i.e., any breach of this policy) will be treated in accordance with these policies.

Pupils:

SMART DEVICES:

- Pupils are **not** permitted to bring smart devices to school. These include, but are not limited to iPods, iPads, tablets, smart watches, digital cameras, mobile phones, Kindles, gaming devices.
- In exceptional circumstances, members of the ISM (In-School Management) Team, in consultation with teaching staff, may give permission to pupils to bring and use smart devices in school.
- Any child who has a device approved by a professional/ NCSE for assistive technology is permitted to use this device as and when is needed throughout the school day as a tool to aid learning.

MOBILE PHONES:

- Pupils do not need mobile phones at school and are requested **not** to bring them to school. We ask for parents' cooperation in this matter.
- If, however, a parent feels that their child genuinely needs to bring their phone to school, this will be permitted from 3rd – 6th Class. In such a case, parents must complete the permission form (Appendix 1) in full and return it to the school before their child brings a mobile phone to school. Pupils from Junior Infants – 2nd Class are not permitted to bring a mobile phone to school, under any circumstances.
- If a mobile phone is deemed absolutely necessary and the relevant form has been signed, pupils must adhere to the following procedures:
 1. Switch off their phone at the outer school gates, when entering the school grounds in the morning.
 2. The phone can be switched on again at the outer gates, when they leave the school grounds.
 3. At 8.45am the pupil must give their phone to their Principal/ Deputy Principal to lock away until 2.45pm.
 4. Children can collect their phone from their Principal/ Deputy Principal at 2.45pm, or on a half day, 12:00pm.
 5. Pupils may **not** bring their phone on school trips or events. They are also **not** permitted on the school grounds after school hours, including during after-school activities.
 6. It is the pupil's responsibility to hand up and collect their phone each day.

- If any pupil brings a mobile phone to school, without permission from the principal/class teacher, that phone will be confiscated and kept in the office until a parent comes to collect it.
- Even with permission, if a pupil is found with/using a phone during school hours, or if their phone rings/beeps in the classroom, that phone will also be taken to the office and the parents will be asked to come and collect the phone.
- In the event of the pupil continuously breaking the above rules, the ISM will inform parents that the pupil is no longer permitted to bring their mobile phone to school.

Parents:

- The Staff and BOM recognise the parents as the child's primary educator and believe that parents have an important role to play in ensuring their child's appropriate and safe use of electronic devices.
- Parents/Guardians are encouraged to regularly check their child's mobile phone/smart devices activity. Parents/ Guardians are encouraged to check social media apps (e.g. Facebook, Snapchat, Viber, WhatsApp, Instagram etc.) on mobile phones and electronic devices to ensure they are aware of their child's online interaction with others and approve of same.
- Parents/Guardians are encouraged to talk with their child regularly about their use of electronic devices and discuss who their child is interacting with and the content of such interactions.
- Parents/ Guardians are encouraged to attend internet safety talks held in the school.
- Parents/ Guardians must complete a Mobile Phone Consent Form (Appendix 1) in full and return it to the school if they wish their child to be permitted to bring a mobile phone to school.

Parents/ Guardians are reminded that in cases of emergency, the school office remains the only point of contact to ensure their child is reached quickly, and helped in any appropriate way. This is also the also point of contact should the school or a pupil need to contact a parent.

- If a staff member has reason to believe that a mobile phone has unsuitable material stored on it, pupils will be required to hand over the phone to a teacher and parents/guardians 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/ Guardians will be informed in such circumstances.
- The school accepts no responsibility for lost, stolen or damaged mobile phones (including at school, and travelling to and from school). The safety and security of mobile phones is wholly a matter for pupils and parents/guardians.
- Parents/Guardians are not permitted to use their own mobile phones for photographic purposes on the school grounds, with the exception of only photographing their own child. This is for reasons of Data Protection and Child Safeguarding.
- Where parents/guardians do provide a mobile phone for their child, they are strongly encouraged to buy a basic phone only, rather than a smart phone with a camera and access to internet and social media platforms.

Staff:

- Staff working directly with children must keep their phones on 'silent' during teaching time/yard duty.
- Personal phone calls may not be made or taken and personal text messages may not be sent or read during teaching time/yard duty unless in exceptional circumstances, and where the staff member has informed a member of the ISM team, where possible.
- There are designated Whatsapp chat groups set up for work purposes, Teachers, SNAs and Social Group. All staff provide prior consent to the group administrators (Principal/ Deputy Principal) before being added to these text groups. If immediate attention needs to be brought to a specific group during the work day these school-based text groups may be utilised. Staff are always reminded that if they wish to communicate to each other that Google Chat connected to their work Gmail account and their email is the preferred way to communicate internally should time allow.
- If a staff member needs to make/take an important call they may organise supervision for their pupils and leave the room to do so.
- In certain situations, staff may use their phone during lessons to access lesson content/ resources/ other school related material when it is not possible to access the teaching PC.
- Teachers are encouraged to be discerning in their use of mobile phones as an educational tool during class.
- Staff should view themselves as role-models for the appropriate use of mobile phones in front of pupils.
- Staff members who use their mobile phones/smart device to take photographs of pupils/their work must consult the Data Protection policy in this regard. All such photos must be deleted by the end of that week and emailed as an attachment to the work emails of the schools Facebook page / website administrators. Staff are also responsible for ensuring that all such photos are also deleted from their 'recently deleted' album, where relevant.
- Staff members must never upload photos/videos of pupils to a staff Whatsapp group or to any other platforms of their personal social media.

Consultation and communication regarding the plan:

This policy was drawn up in consultation with staff while cognisant of pupils and parent's needs. It was built upon the previous Mobile Phone policy and amended to reflect changes in legislation Children First Addendum 2019) and Departmental guidance (DE Circular 0038/2018) The attention of all new families will be drawn to this policy upon registration in the school. All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan by the Management & Droichead Teams where appropriate.

This policy will be published on the school website. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department of Education and Skills and the Patron, if requested. Hard copies of this, and all school policies, are available at the school on request.

Ratification of the plan: This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 01/02/2022, and will be reviewed in June 2024. It may be reviewed at an earlier date, to reflect changes in legislation or in other school policies (e.g., review of Child Safeguarding or Data Protection policies).

Signed: Anne O'Donovan

Chairperson of Board of Management

Signed: Thomas Carroll

Principal/Secretary to the Board of Management

Date: 01/02/2022

Date of next review: June 2024

Appendix 1:



St. Mark's Boys National School

Mobile Phone Permission Form

Name of Pupil:	
Pupil's mobile phone number: (for policy monitoring and Child Safeguarding):	
I believe that my child needs to bring their mobile phone to school each day because:	
<p>I agree that my child will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Switch off his/her phone each morning before they enter the school grounds and will give it to the Principal/ Deputy Principal at 8.45am. ● Collect their phone from the Principal at home time. ● Have their phone confiscated if it is used inappropriately. The phone will be kept in the office until a Parent/Guardian collects it. ● Follow all the procedures and rules outlined in the Acceptable Use Policy and Code of Behaviour Policy in relation to the use of mobile phones and smart devices. <p>I agree to: all guidelines, procedures and rules set out in the school's Mobile Phone and Smart Devices policy, including that the school takes no responsibility for lost, stolen or damaged phones (either at school, or on the way to and from school)</p>	
Signature of Parent/Carer:	
Signature of Pupil:	
Date:	
Received by:	
Placed on Students file on:	

*Storage and retention of this data is in keeping with our Data Protection Policy.