

**Howth Primary School**  
**Scoil Mhuire Beann Eadair**

**School Policy on Mobile Phones and Smart Devices**

**PUPIL POLICY**

**RATIONALE**

The possession and use of mobile phones by school pupils is now extensive, even in the primary school sector.

Our core business of teaching and learning needs to be conducted in an environment free from unnecessary distractions or disruptions. Therefore, **the school strongly discourages (and asks all parents to discourage) pupils from bringing of mobile phones and smart devices to school.**

Use of mobile phones and smart devices (particularly with the advent of increasing sophisticated equipment and camera phones) presents a number of problems, including:

1. Mobile phones and smart devices can be valuable items and might render a pupil vulnerable to theft.
2. Mobile phones and smart devices (and their cost and level of sophistication – or otherwise) can make pupils objects of envy or disparagement and could have implications with regard to discipline and potential bullying.
3. Even when apparently silent, the use of mobile phones and smart devices for texting purposes could be potentially undermining of classroom discipline.
4. Use of newer phones and smart devices with integrated cameras could lead to child protections and data protection issues with regard to inappropriate capture, use or distribution of images.
5. Many of the above issues also pertain to I-Pads, Smart Watches and other devices etc. They can be very intrusive, distracting and antisocial in a school environment.
6. Mobile phones may be used to conduct bullying campaigns.

Where mobile phones and smart devices are needed, the school is prepared to allow them on the premises but only within the parameters of the policy as stated below. The guiding principles of this policy are student and staff safety as well as the promotion of learning.

**DEFINITION**

For the purpose of this policy, the terms ‘phone’ and ‘smart devices’ include:

- Any device that can connect to a mobile network, Wi-Fi or internet service;
- Any device that can make voice calls or send and receive text/ video/ voice messages, sound/ video recordings and any other digital or other communications of any kind;

- Any device that can take photographs/ videos or connect to social media apps and service.

This includes but is not limited to all types of phones, tablets, smart watches, music players and any other such devices.

## **SCOPE OF THIS POLICY**

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies to provide further context and clarification:

- The Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment
- Code of Behaviour
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Data Protection

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.

## **SCHOOL PROCEDURES**

As a general rule, pupils are discouraged from bringing mobile phones or other smart devices to school. However, the Board of Management of the school recognises that some parents may occasionally wish or need to contact their child or to be aware of their child's whereabouts after school hours. It is therefore not practical to totally ban mobile phones and smart devices from school premises.

However there is a need for regulation of their usage and pupils are expected to adhere to the following procedures. These procedures are in place in the interest of the children so that the best learning environment is created for each child in our care.

1. The use of mobile phones and smart devices by pupils is not allowed while pupils are in the care of the school staff, while at school, on trips from the school, while involved in extra-curricular activities, or in after-school activities/ clubs on the school premises.
2. **Pupils must switch off their phone/ device at the school wall prior to entering the school grounds in the morning.** The devices can be switched on again when the pupils leave the school grounds.
3. When in school phones and smart devices must remain in the pupils' school bags for the duration of the school day.
4. Pupils should mark their phones/ device clearly with their name.

5. If pupils need to contact their parents this can be done through the office. Likewise, if parents need to contact their child they should ring the school and request that a message be passed on.
6. **If a pupil is found to be using their phone/ device during school time, the phone/ device will be confiscated immediately and stored for safe keeping in the school office. The pupil's parents will be contacted and will have to collect the phone/ device from the school. The school accepts no responsibility for any confiscated phone or smart device.**
7. If a teacher or staff member has any suspicions that a mobile phone/ smart device has unsuitable material shared on it, the pupil will be requested to hand over the phone/ device to the teacher. The pupil's parents will be contacted to collect the device from the school office.
8. Where there is a suspicion 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. Parents will be informed in such circumstances. 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, the school may consider it appropriate to involve the Gardaí.
9. Pupils who use mobile phones/ smart devices to bully other pupils, to send offensive messages, to send offensive/ inappropriate images or to make offensive calls will be dealt with under the Code of Behaviour and the Anti-Bullying Policy. The school has a strong Anti-Bullying position on these matters.
10. The same applies to pupils who take unauthorised photos and recordings of other pupils or staff members using a mobile phone or a smart device.
11. Repeated infringements will be reported to the Principal. And dealt with appropriately.
12. The school accepts no responsibility for replacing lost, stolen or damaged mobile phones or smart devices. Phones and devices are the sole responsibility of the pupil.

## **EXCEPTIONS**

Exceptions to the policy may be applied during school hours if certain conditions are met, specifically:

- Learning related exceptions
- Health & Wellbeing related exceptions

## Learning-related exceptions

Specific Exception	Documentation
For pupils for whom a reasonable adjustment to the learning programme is needed due to an additional or special educational need.	Agreed between class teacher, SET and parents, and recorded in the Student Support File

These device will have been sanctioned and purchased through the NCSE Assistive Technology Scheme.

## Health & Wellbeing related exceptions

Specific Exception	Documentation
Students with a health condition	Healthcare Plan for pupils Emergency Plan

## **STAFF POLICY**

It is recognised that mobile phones can be intrusive and distracting in all situations and particularly in schools.

The school recognises the advances in technology and is aware that a staff member may use their phones to implement classroom reward systems, or to hotspot Wi-Fi when there are internet issues. However every reasonable effort should be made to use the school technology in the classroom, namely laptop and/ or iPad.

The use of mobile phones by staff for essential calls should be kept to a minimum and should be taken/made if possible in an open area or in an area where pupils are not present. Supervision of the class should be arranged during these times.

Personal calls should be carried out during break times. Incoming personal calls should be reserved for urgent matters.

The use of mobile phones on yard duty is not permitted, except in exceptional circumstances.

**Staff are permitted to use camera phones to take photos of class activities, which are to be used for school purposes.**

## REVIEW

This policy, implemented in June 2014, will be reviewed on a regular basis as required.

## IMPLEMENTATION AND COMMUNICATION

The Board of Management ratified this policy on 27<sup>th</sup> June 2024. This policy will be published on the school website and a copy provided to the Parents Association. Parents will be made aware of the policy via Aladdin. Staff can access the policy on Google Drive. The effectiveness of this policy will be assessed by communication with all relevant personnel.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Sile Ni Mhaoldomhnaigh  
Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Mary Downes  
Principal

Ratified by the BOM on: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: 26/05/14

Reviewed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: April 2017

Reviewed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: 17/12/2020

Reviewed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: 27/06/2024