



O Connell Primary Mobile Phone Policy



An Edmund Rice School

The spirit of this policy is that pupils should not bring mobile phones to school or to school related off site activities. Pupils who ignore the spirit of this policy and bring a mobile to school, whether they use it or not, will be required to hand over their phone to a member of staff and parents will be asked to collect it from the school office. This policy outlines the appropriate use of mobile phones and electronic devices in our school.

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 the bringing of mobile phones to school by students.

The school is prepared to allow mobile phones on the premises but only within the parameters of the policy as stated below:

- Use of mobile phones (particularly with the advent of increasingly sophisticated equipment and camera phones) presents a number of problems, including:
 1. Mobile phones can be valuable items and might render a pupil vulnerable to theft
 2. Mobile phones (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 mobiles phones for texting purposes could be potentially undermining of classroom discipline
 4. Use of the newer phones with integrated cameras could lead to child protection and data protection issues with regard to inappropriate capture, use or distribution of images
 5. Many of the above issues also pertain to I-Pods, Game Boys, PSPs, etc. They can be very intrusive, distracting and antisocial in a school environment.

Aims

- To inform all members of our school community about the appropriate use of mobile phones at our school.
- To outline the procedures and processes of this policy.

The school's Board of Management accepts that it is not realistic to have a policy which prohibits pupils from taking phones to school. Not only would it be impractical to forbid pupils from carrying them (when the latest phones are so slim that they could be hidden easily), but it is believed that a number of parents would be concerned for health and safety reasons if their child were not allowed to carry a phone at all (and might therefore be unable to contact their parents in respect of any situation that might arise).

However, it is the Board's policy to prohibit the unauthorised use by pupils of mobile phones while on school premises, grounds or off site activities e.g. school swimming, as follows:

Guidelines for Children

- The Board discourages (and asks all parents to discourage) pupils from bringing mobile phones to schools on the grounds that they are valuable and may be lost or stolen.
- Where a pupil needs 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 the school premises, grounds or during off-site school activities (such as school swimming or sports activities). All phones must be handed in to the class teacher at the start of the day and will be returned at the end of the day.
- Parents are reminded that in cases of emergency, the school office/principal remains the first point of contact and can ensure your child is reached quickly, and helped in any appropriate way.
- **Where a parent feels that their child having a phone in school is essential the following will apply:**
 1. Parents must meet with the principal and sign a consent form, outlining the reasons the pupil needs to carry a mobile phone.
 2. This letter, if approved, will be kept on file.
 3. The phones must be turned off and handed in to the class teacher at the start of the school day.
 4. The teacher will keep the phones locked in a drawer until the end of school day.
 5. The school or Principal will not be liable for the replacement of lost, stolen or damaged devices.
 6. Any child found to intentionally have a phone in school without a parental letter or without having handed it to Principal in the morning will have the phone confiscated.
 7. The phone will not be returned until a parent collects it from the principal.

Similarly, the use of electronic games, personal stereos, etc. is not permitted during the school day (including arrival, class time, breaks and dismissal).

- Where a pupil is found by a member of staff to be using a mobile phone or other electronic device, as above, for any purpose, the phone/device will be confiscated from the pupil and returned only to the parent, guardian or carer.
- The school will not be liable for the replacement of lost, stolen or damaged devices.
- The school incorporates this policy into the Code of Behaviour and will treat breaches as they would treat 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 teachers or sharing inappropriate messages via Bluetooth this will be regarded as a serious offence and disciplinary action will be taken according to the school's Discipline Policy.
- If images of other pupils or teachers have been taken, the phone will not be returned to the pupil until the images have been removed by the pupil in the presence of a teacher.
- Any misuse of a phone/device will lead to removal of phone privileges for the pupil.

School Trips and Outings

- Children are permitted to bring mobile phones with them on school trips and tours; however the school will not be liable for the replacement of lost, stolen or damaged devices.. A contact number will be provided for parents which may be used by them to contact the teacher on the trip.
- Children may also bring cameras with them on school tours.

Guidelines for Staff

- During teaching time, while on playground duty and during meetings, mobile phones will be switched off or put on 'silent' or 'discreet' mode.
- Phones will not be used in sight of children except in the case of emergency.
- In very exceptional circumstances (eg a car has broken down en route to school and a mechanic has been called) the teacher may, with the permission of the principal, have their phones on for a period. An explanation should be given to the class in this case.
- Teachers are reminded to be careful when using their personal mobile phones to contact parents. Always ensure your phone is on private mode if you are contacting a parent.

This policy was reviewed at a staff meeting on Nov 6th 2023 and adopted by the Board of Management on 9th November 2023.

This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents' Association. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

Signed: Chris Purcell
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: [Signature]
(Principal)

Date: Nov 2023

Date of next review: Nov 2024