

Smart Phone and Electronic Devices Policy

Introductory Statement

This policy was revised and updated in response to technological advances, which have seen a significant increase in hand held electronic devices amongst the school population over recent years, and in keeping with DES Circular 0038/2018 "realise the potential of digital technologies to enhance teaching, learning and assessment so that Ireland's young people become engaged thinkers, active learners, knowledge constructors and global citizens to participate fully in society and the economy."

Rationale:

- iPods and mobile phones and electronic devices are intrusive and distracting in a school environment and can reduce socialisation during break times.
- Strategies must be put in place to reduce the intrusiveness of unauthorised technology in a school situation.
- Some electronic devices may be harmful due to frequent use.
- Mobile phones may be used to conduct bullying campaigns.
- To promote digital technologies for teaching, learning and assessment as a priority.

Relationship to School Ethos:

The use of smart phones and other electronic devices without supervision contravenes the provision of a safe and secure school environment and is not conducive to learning, a provision which is central to the mission statement and ethos of Rathgar National School.

Aims:

- To lessen intrusions on and distractions to children's learning during the school day.
- To ensure children have maximum opportunities to socialise positively during break times.
- To ensure that all electronic devices in the school (iPads, computers, etc.) are used under the instruction and supervision of staff only and are used for educational and learning purposes.
- To ensure the area of safe and ethical use of the internet is addressed in the context of the whole school approach to well-being.
- To guide and support children to become good digital citizens.
- "Using digital technologies mediated by teachers with the skills to exploit the potential of technologies can be invaluable in equipping children with the skills to navigate the online world safely". DES Circular 0038/2018

The following are guidelines for mobile phone/electronic devices usage in the school:

- Children are not allowed to use mobile phones or their own personal electronic games or devices during school hours.
- Pupils are discouraged from bringing mobile phones or electronic devices into school.
- Where a mobile/device is required after school, pupils should hand their switched off mobile and/or device to the class teacher/Principal for safe keeping. It will be kept in a designated safe area throughout the school day. The device should be powered off and may be collected at the end of the school day.
- Liability for any loss, damage or theft of any device is NOT under any circumstances the responsibility of the staff or Board of Management.
- Children who need to contact home during school hours may do so through the school administrator or class teacher (using the school landline/ school mobile phone).
- Use of mobile phones/electronic devices are not permitted during after school activities such as Hockey, French, Spanish, Chess, etc.
- Any pupil who brings a mobile phone or electronic device to school and does not hand it to the teacher/school principal, risks having it confiscated and not returned until a Parent/Guardian collects it.
- The use of school owned electronic devices (iPads, laptops, etc.) is strictly under the supervision of staff and in line with our IT Policy Acceptable Use Policy.
- Pupils who use mobile phones/social media to bully other pupils or send offensive messages or to make offensive calls will face disciplinary actions as per the school's Code of Behaviour.
- The same applies to pupils who take unauthorised photos or recordings of other students or staff members.
- 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 ineffective, as with all incidents, the school may consider it necessary to involve the Gardaí.
- The school staff and Parents' Association will ensure educational talks by experts for pupils, parents and staff to endeavour to keep pupils and parents educated on any risks associated with mobile phones, tablets or internet enabled devices – such as cyber bullying, social media security and content, etc.

Guidelines and Procedures for Staff

- Classroom supervision is usually organised if a class teacher must contact other professionals or outside agencies in relation to a child. This contact is made using the school landline or school mobile.
- The organisation of school events such as sporting games, events, etc. should be organised on the school landline or school mobile.
- The Principal may always have his/her mobile phone turned on when in classrooms, so that they are contactable by the office / staff (in case of an emergency).
- Staff personal mobiles may be used to contact the Principal / office in case of an emergency in the classroom / yard, etc.
- Staff personal calls are ordinarily confined to break times (but not while on yard duty).

- All staff should have their phones on silent during class time.
- It is acknowledged that all school staff may need to be contactable by their family during the day. Staff personal calls on their mobile phone may be answered in cases of such an emergency.
- The Board of Management advises that all staff should keep their personal mobile phone number and social networking sites private.

Associated Policies: Acceptable Usage Policy, Anti Bullying Policy, Data Protection Policy.

Roles and Responsibilities:

All staff share in the co-ordination and implementation of this policy.

Evaluation:

This policy is monitored on an ongoing basis and amendments added as new technology and/or legal requirements dictate.

Implementation:

This policy was last reviewed in 2023.

This current policy was reviewed and updated on: September 2023

Signed: A. S. Shevt

