



## **Mobile Phone Policy**

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## **1. Introduction**

Ballymakenny College recognises that it is a student's right to have a mobile phone\* and we acknowledge the positive aspects of this. Nonetheless, this right cannot compromise or disrupt teaching and learning. Mobile phones can cause huge disruption to learning and to the positive atmosphere within a school. Urgent communication calls to or from a student will ALWAYS be facilitated through the school office. There are potential dangers for the school community (pupils, Parents/Guardians, visitors, staff, coaches, teaching staff, management, and any other members of the school community) stemming from the misuse and abuse of electronic media. As a result, the school will rigorously endeavour to protect the personal dignity and right to privacy of all the members of the school community. Ballymakenny College will endeavour to protect students from the harmful use of these devices during school hours. Where a student brings a mobile phone to school, they do so at their own risk. Please note that Ballymakenny College therefore accepts no responsibility for damage to or loss of the mobile phone. We ask all Parents/ Guardians, students and staff to read the following policy very carefully.

\*In the context of this policy, any reference to mobile phones include all other communication devices directly linked to such e.g. headphones, smart watches, Apple watches, Fitbit watches, AirPods, Buds etc.

## **2.Rationale**

- The use of mobile phones has increased dramatically in the last number of years.
- Mobile Phones can distract from teaching and learning when used in an inappropriate manner, i.e. if they ring or are used during class time.
- Mobile Phones can be a cause of difficulty in schools when/if mobile phones are used in 'cyber bullying', where students/staff/other members of the school community are photographed against their will and where recordings/video recordings are made against the will of those featured etc.
- Mobile Phones can be mislaid or taken by other students.

- Mobile Phones can be a major distraction to students in the classroom, on the corridor/ in the bathrooms, causing isolation rather than interaction and integration of students.
- Mobile phones/smart watches have the potential to compromise the integrity of examinations.
- The use of mobile phones in State Examinations is prohibited. Candidates using mobile phones as calculators etc., are liable to have their examinations cancelled and possibly barred from all public examinations in this state.

### **3.The Aims of the Mobile Phone Policy**

- To optimise the teaching and learning environment for all staff and students.
- To reduce the possible distractions of students;
- To reduce screen time and the associated risks;
- To provide an environment free from threat or invasion of privacy (GDPR) while students and any member of staff are in school;
- To discourage cyber bullying among students in the school;
- To encourage interaction and communication between students.

### **4.Related Policies**

#### **4.1 Code of Behaviour:**

Our school's Code of Behaviour exists to maintain an optimal learning environment and positive atmosphere for all members of our school community. All other school policies including the Mobile Phone policy directly relate (to a greater or lesser extent) to the School's Code of Behaviour. It is the interdependence and co-operation of these policies in an organic way that ensures their effectiveness. However, the Code of Behaviour is essential in ensuring the effective implementation of all other policies. Where the strategies implemented by each individual policy have been exhausted, issues may be referred to the Code of Behaviour for resolution. For example; where students do not comply with the school's expectations under the Mobile Phone Policy then issues may be referred to be dealt with under the Code of Behaviour. It is understood that students choosing to enrol in Ballymakenny College will accept and fully comply with the policies of the school. See school website for all school policies.

#### **4.2 Acceptable Usage Policy/ Data Protection Policy:**

- Students are not permitted to take photographs or recordings (audio or visual) of any member of the school community without their expressed permission and the permission of the school Principal/Deputy Principal(s). Using phones or any other recording devices to record a person without all appropriate authorisation, will be considered a serious breach of the School's Acceptable Use Policy.
- Students will observe good 'netiquette' (i.e. etiquette on the internet) in their representation of and comments on members of the school community and about the school itself.
- Students will not upload, download, send or forward any material on the internet that is obscene, defamatory or intended to annoy or harass a member of the school community.
- Students should note that no photographs of, nor recordings (audio or visual) of, or comments about a member of the school community can be uploaded to the internet without their express permission of the school Principal.

#### **4.3 Bí Cineálta Policy:**

Instances where the internet is used to insult, offend, slander, defame, harass or bully a member of the school community by another member of the school community will be investigated under the Ballymakenny College Bí Cineálta Policy. It should be noted that it is a criminal offence to use a mobile phone to menace, harass or offend another person. As such, the school may consider it necessary to involve the Gardaí in certain circumstances.

#### **4.4 Child Protection Policy:**

The Mobile Phone Policy directly supports the school's Child Protection Policy by reducing opportunities for inappropriate contact, recording, or sharing of images of students. Limiting mobile phone use helps safeguard students from potential exploitation or harm and ensures compliance with child protection guidelines. Any misuse of mobile devices that compromises a student's safety or wellbeing will be treated as a serious matter and referred to the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) in accordance with statutory child protection procedures.

Serious breaches of any of these policies will be dealt with by the appropriate House Leader and/or the Deputy Principal(s)/Principal and may be reported to the Board of Management.

### **5. Communication between Parents/Guardians/Students during school hours**

To ensure that the correct sign-out procedures for leaving school are followed, all communication with home in respect of illness or emergencies is to be made through the school office. The school phone is made readily available, free of charge, for such communication. For safety reasons it is important that school is aware of students leaving the school premises during the day so mobile phones are not to be used to contact Parents/Guardians for this purpose.

Parents/Guardians who need to contact a pupil urgently, for example for a medical emergency or family bereavement, may do so by calling the school office at 041-9802459 and leave a message on the answering machine, if the phone is unattended at that time. As the answering service is checked at regular intervals any messages will be promptly relayed to students.

Parents/Guardians are invited also to email the school office at [info@ballymakennycollege.ie](mailto:info@ballymakennycollege.ie) or [reception@ballymakennycollege.ie](mailto:reception@ballymakennycollege.ie) if they need an urgent message conveyed to a pupil. In the event of non-urgent messages, the office operates under a 'best effort – not guaranteed' policy, as to close the office in order to communicate such messages may not always be possible. Parents/Guardians are strongly discouraged from contacting the students directly through their mobile phone / mobile device. In the event of this occurring and the students phone disrupting a lesson or otherwise, the student will be liable for the sanctions imposed.

### **6. School Rules in relation to Mobile Phones**

The misuse of mobile phones, electronic recording devices, or the internet is a serious breach of the School's Code of Behaviour and Acceptable User Policy. All mobile phones must be POWERED OFF (not on silent) and not visible on the students person. In the interest of best practice, phones should be stored in the student's locker or school bag while on the school grounds for the full duration of the school day. Headphones / AirPods / buds must not be

worn during or between lessons (unless an agreement has been made by a specific teacher for a specific educational purpose) for reasons of safety and courtesy.

The full duration of the school day on the school grounds include the following;

- From 8:15am each morning until the end of the school day, mobile phones and electronic devices are not permitted in the designated break and lunch areas.
- during any extra-curricular activities that occur after school or during break times.
- as students are walking out of the school after their last class of the day.
- during House, Mock exams and State Examinations.

Note: Once students have left the school building at the end of the day, they are permitted to take out their phone. While on school trips or extra- curricular events, students are permitted their phones while on the buses en-route to their destination. However, as a matter of courtesy to the tour providers (in the event of a tour/talk/presentation etc.), mobile phones must be powered off and out of sight.

Where a teacher forms the opinion that a student's mobile phone is causing a disruption to learning e.g. the phone rings/sounds or the student is suspected of messaging/using the phone (whether in class or otherwise) etc., the phone will be confiscated. It must be given to the teacher on request and it will be confiscated for a definite period of time. (See section 7). The student must hand over the phone immediately and is not permitted to remove the SIM card from the phone prior to confiscation.

If upon request, the phone is not handed over to the teacher, the student may be subject to disciplinary sanctions (up to and including suspension) for refusing to comply with school rules.

## **7. Policy Sanctions**

Any phone confiscated should be brought to the office of the deputy principal where it will be stored securely. The phone will be returned after a definite period of time from the deputy principal's office.

### 7.1 Visible Phone Offence:

Where a phone is visible on the student's person:

- **1st offence:** The phone will be returned to the student after 1 entire school day. This offence will be recorded as a -1 demerit on the students VS account and brought to the attention of the tutor and house leader.
- **2nd offence:** The phone will be returned to the parent/guardian after 2 consecutive school days. This offence will be recorded as a -1 demerit on the students VS account and brought to the attention of the tutor and house leader
- **3rd offence:** At this stage, the student is in serious breach of the school's mobile phone policy and the school's code of behaviour. A meeting will be held between the parent/guardian, student, house leader or principal/deputy principal and may involve sanctions up to and including suspension.

### 7.2 Disruption to Teaching & Learning Offence:

Whereby the presence of a mobile phone interrupts the natural flow of the lesson and whereby the teacher needs to stop the lesson to deal with and sanction the student in question.

- **1st offence:** The phone will be returned to the student after 3 consecutive school days. This offence will be recorded as a -1 demerit on the students VS account and brought to the attention of the tutor and house leader.
- **2nd offence:** The phone will be returned to the parent/guardian after 5 consecutive school days. This offence will be recorded as a -1 demerit on the students VS account and brought to the attention of the tutor and house leader.
- **3rd offence:** At this stage, the student is in serious breach of the school's mobile phone policy and the school's code of behaviour. A meeting will be held between the parent/guardian, student, house leader or principal/deputy principal and may involve sanctions up to and including suspension.

A text will be sent to the parent/guardian that the phone has been confiscated. All issues in relation to the mis-use of mobile phones will be dealt with on an academic year by year basis.

## **8. Supports/Further Info:**

- Webwise.ie
- Hotline.ie
- Gov.ie
- Cybersafekids.ie
- A Parent's Guide to a Better Internet - TUSLA

## **9. Success Criteria & Monitoring**

This Mobile Phone Policy was devised in consultation with the students, parents/guardians, staff, management and Board of Management of Ballymakenny College.

This Mobile Phone Policy will be reviewed regularly as part of the normal Whole School Development Planning review cycle. If necessary, the Mobile Phone Policy may be reviewed at any time in light of changing circumstances and/or changing legislation. Any amendments which need to be made will be in keeping with the general philosophy of the school. Any suggested amendments/improvements will be communicated to the Principal or Deputy Principal(s) who will consult with all partners.

Ratified by the Board of Management on June 18<sup>th</sup> , 2024

Signed by Chairperson:

*Brid Rocks*

Reviewed by the Board of Management on 10<sup>th</sup> of February, 2026