



## Sacred Heart School Tullamore

### **SHS Mobile Phone Policy 2025- Pilot Scheme**

#### **Our Mission Statement**

***To provide a holistic education in the Mercy tradition***

#### **Our Vision**

“In keeping with the Mercy tradition, we seek to achieve the holistic development and the achievement of the full potential of each student, particularly those who are disadvantaged or marginalised. We strive to ensure that our students leave our school with a healthy self-image, enhanced by the life skills and abilities necessary to make a positive contribution to society.”

#### **A Voluntary Secondary School**

Ours is what is known as a Voluntary Secondary School for girls. It dates from 1836 when the Mercy Sisters started a school soon after they arrived in Tullamore and founded their second house here.

The school is now a member of CEIST (Catholic Education, An Irish Schools Trust) and is managed by a Board of Management.

#### **A Catholic School**

A Catholic school helps students to develop their understanding of their faith. Ours is a Catholic school, but it is not a school for Catholics only. Due to the universal, non-discriminatory nature of Catholicism and the value it places on ecumenism and interfaith dialogue, seeing God at work in all people, Catholic schools are open to the admission of pupils of all faiths and none.

Catholic education values tolerance and inclusiveness and sees the presence of children from other denominations as an enrichment of the educational experience and an opportunity for deeper understanding among people holding diverse convictions.

## **Introduction to Policy on Mobile Phone, Smart Watch.**

Our school recognises that the use of mobile phone/devices has increased dramatically in the last number of years. For this policy, references to mobile phones includes smart phones /watches in all instances..

The SHS recognises that mobile phones are defined as non-academic screen time and as such, are not associated with curriculum or academic development. As a digital school, we have provided the means and skillset for academic screen time only and this is through the use of devices provided by our supplier (Oliveforeducation).

Circular 0045/2025 requires that schools implement a policy that restricts the use of, and access to, personal mobile phones by students in all recognised schools for the duration of the school day.

Students may not have a mobile phone/device on their person during the school day. All mobile phones must be stored in the storage locker provided.

Urgent phone calls to or from a student will ALWAYS be facilitated through the office. There are potential dangers for the school community (pupils, parents, visitors, staff, coaches, teaching staff, management, trustees) 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.

The SHS Mobile Phone Policy 2025 restricts the use of a mobile phone on the school premises for the duration of the school day. This includes breaks and at lunchtime. This is a pilot scheme for the duration of 2025-2026 and will be reviewed with all stakeholders in May 2026.

The intention of this policy is to allow students to disconnect from their online world and connect more with their peers for the duration of the school day.

Mobile phone/devices can be a cause of difficulty in schools when/if they are used in 'cyber bullying', where students/teachers are photographed against their will, where some recordings/video recordings are made against the will of those featured etc. Mobile phone/devices can be a major distraction to students in the classroom or on the corridor. They are a threat to privacy in bathrooms or changing rooms. They can also cause isolation rather than interaction and integration of students.

### **Aims of the policy:**

**This policy is intended to support schools and their students by:**

- improving the learning environment in schools by reducing distraction
- reducing the risk of cyberbullying and access to inappropriate content during school hours

- increasing traditional social interactions between students at school break times.

**The objective of this policy is to:**

- to clearly set out and explain the agreed policy regarding access to and use of mobile devices in our school.
- To support the wellbeing and dignity of all students and all staff.  
To ensure that courtesy to, and respect and consideration of others are always paramount.
- To promote the SHS as a phone-free environment, to support students' wellbeing, concentration, academic performance and development.
- To provide a space in the SHS for young people to be able to disconnect from the online world and to assist our students to become less dependent on their mobile phones.
- To provide the knowledge and skills to navigate the online world in a safe and ethical manner.

**Important Legislation and Circulars Supporting the Development of this Policy:**

- General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) May 2018
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Data Protection (Amendment) Act 2003
- Child Trafficking and Pornography Act 1997
- Interception Act 1993
- Video Recordings Act 1989
- Human Rights Act 1998 and the European Convention on Human Rights
- Dept Education and Skills Circular 0038/2018
- Digital Strategy for Schools 2027
- DEY 0045/2025
- Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act and UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report "Technology in Education"

**Scope of the Policy**

This Policy applies to the entire school campus which includes the school buildings, environs and all school related activities including all school tours and trips that occur on-site and off-site in the name of the school.

(See SHS School Trip Policy)

The regulations for use of mobile phones are applicable for the duration of the school day-8.45 a.m.-3.30 p.m. and during evening study.

## Responsible Storage of Mobile Phones

**The school, and the classroom are protected spaces. Photographs and videos taken in these spaces will be considered a serious breach of the Code of Behaviour. The privacy and dignity of staff and students must always be upheld.**

The school has provided storage solutions for all mobile phones and they must be kept in these storage areas from 8.45am to 3.30pm. Students must provide that lockers are locked at all times.

Responsibility for the phone rests with the student and the school does not accept financial responsibility for damage, loss or theft. We advise appropriate insurance for any mobile phones brought into school. Students must ensure that their locker is locked at all times.

- **The following are important elements of good mobile phone use for our students:**
- Mobile phones must be placed and locked in lockers at the start of the school day and only removed at the end of the school day at 3.30pm.
- Ear pods may be used during the school day, in conjunction with the student device and at the request of the teacher.
- If there is an emergency which requires communication with home, a student must speak to a member of staff who will deal with the matter, and they will have permission to use the phone in the office to contact a parent.
- In an emergency parents/guardians should phone the school office at break -time or lunchtime and a message will be given to the student.
- Students who feel unwell must report to the office who will contact home. Students are not permitted to use their mobile phones to make such calls. This allows support and supervision and avoids students leaving the school grounds without this being recorded by the office.
- **Mobile phones/smart phones/watches cannot, under any circumstances, be taken into examination rooms during State Examinations. Breach of this rule may lead to their examination being cancelled and the possibly of being barred from all public examinations in the state.**

- While off the school premises, but on school business (games, field trips and school tours etc.) mobile phone/devices must be switched off. However, if it is necessary for the student to contact a parent/guardian, then permission to turn on a mobile phone/device must be sought from the supervising teacher. The phone must be turned off again at the conclusion of the conversation.
- All bank cards /Revolut etc will need to be physical from August 25<sup>th</sup>. Contactless payments will not be possible.
- Students who use their mobile phone to monitor a medical condition and are certified as such, are exempted from this policy following a conversation with the senior management team.

#### **Procedure when a breach is identified and sanctions**

1.If a student is using a mobile phone for any reason the phone/device will be confiscated and handed into the office and stored securely in the specific storage area for collection. It must be collected by a parent/guardian from the principal/office between 3.30pm and 4 pm that evening. A repeated incident with the same student will result in a request for a meeting with parents and student.

2.Refusal to hand up a mobile phone when requested by a staff member on instruction will be dealt with under the school Cde of Behaviour and may result in suspension.

3. A record of this is made by the staff member and logged in the students' journal/Compass.

4.Students who contact parents on their mobile phones during the day to organise collection without going through the office will face suspension.

5. An incident where mobile phones/devices are used to bully or harass a member of the school community by sending offensive messages or calls is a serious breach of the schools' Code of Behaviour and will be dealt with accordingly. It should be noted that it is a criminal offence to use a mobile phone/device to menace, harass or offend another person. The school may consider it appropriate to involve the Gardaí /Tusla such instances.

#### **Implementation of the policy**

School personnel have the responsibility of enforcing this policy. A copy of the policy will be circulated to all staff members. Parents/guardians are requested to familiarise themselves with the policy and to sign the relevant section of the journal. Parents/guardians are requested not to contact students by mobile phone at any time during the school day.

This policy will be discussed with students and Year Heads at their Induction at the start of the school year to highlight the importance of this practice.

It will also be dealt with at each Parent Induction Evening.

Contact with the school may be made through the office.

By enrolling and attending the Sacred Heart School, students acknowledge that bullying or harassment of pupils or staff via mobile phone misuse is unacceptable in any form and that using a mobile phone to take photographs and/or video clips of other pupils/staff without individual permissions is not permitted and will incur sanctions up to an including suspension or permanent exclusion from the school.

**Students are required to use their locker to house their phone for the duration of the school day. All students will be given a locker at the start of the school year. A lock will be required and all students are required to ensure their lockers are locked for the entirety of the school day. If a lock has failed, students are asked to contact the Caretaker as soon as possible to request the locker to be unlocked and to organise a replacement lock. A replacement lock will be available (for a small fee) from the school office.**

### **Monitoring of the policy**

A record will be kept by the principal of all phones confiscated. Recurring breaches of this policy will result in referral to the Board of Management.

### **Policy review and dates of review**

This policy will be reviewed by the school management authority periodically or when necessary due to changes in mobile device capabilities or school circumstances.

### **Review Dates**

<b>Parents' Council</b>	May 2026
<b>Student Council</b>	May 2026
<b>Staff</b>	May 2026
<b>BOM</b>	May 2026

### **Date of policy adoption**

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on:

**Date: August 19 2025**

**Signed:**



**Chairperson of Board of Management**

