

PRIMROSE HILL NATIONAL SCHOOL

MOBILE TELEPHONE AND ELECTRONIC DEVICE POLICY

Introduction

The possession and use of electronic devices and mobile phones by school pupils is now extensive.

Appropriate use of electronic devices, including mobile phone technology is welcomed at Primrose Hill National School and overall, electronic devices are seen as a valuable educational tool. At the same time, the school recognises potential problems associated with electronic devices and mobile phones, some of which are listed below:

- Mobile phones and other electronic devices including Smart Watches can be valuable items and might render a pupil vulnerable to theft.
- Mobile phones and Smart Watches (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.
- Even when apparently silent, the use of mobiles phones for texting purposes could be potentially undermining of classroom discipline.
- Use of phones with integrated cameras could lead to child protection and data protection issues with regard to inappropriate capture, use or distribution of images and videos.
- Many of the above issues also pertain to I-pods, I-pads, Game Boys, Nintendo devices, Smart-watches and other electronic devices. They can be very intrusive, distracting and anti-social in a school environment.

Aim

The aim of this Mobile Phone and Electronic Device Policy is to

- ensure that pupils will benefit from learning opportunities offered by electronic resources in a safe and effective manner.
- inform all members of our school community about the appropriate use of electronic devices and mobile phones at our school
- outline the procedures and processes of this policy

Mobile Phones

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, 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 on their way to or from school if walking home by themselves).

Mobile Phones & Electronic Devices

The school acknowledges the usefulness and practicality of mobile phones / electronic devices and recognises their potential as an educational resource. Many features on mobile phones /electronic devices such as Organiser (calendar, calculator, convertor, etc.), Applications (voice recorder, stopwatch, image editor, video recording) or even Alarms are very useful and may be used under the direction of the class teacher. If and when any such activities take place parents will be notified in advance.

Nevertheless, it is the Board's policy to ensure appropriate use of mobile phones, smart watches and electronic devices while on school premises, grounds or during off-site activities e.g. school tour, by means of the following guidelines:

Guidelines for pupils

- The Board encourages parents to request that children leave mobile phones, smart watches and other electronic devices at home as they are valuable and may be lost or stolen.
- Where a pupil does bring a mobile phone or smart watch to school, the parent must inform the Principal in writing of the request to bring such an item to school through the use of the Application Form attached to this policy.
- Where a pupil brings a mobile phone or smart watch to school, the phone/ smart watch must be switched off and handed in to the office on arrival to school and must not be used for any purpose on school premises, grounds or during off-site school activities (such as swimming or sports activities).
- Parents are reminded that in cases of emergency, the school office remains the first point of contact and can ensure your child is reached quickly, and helped in any appropriate way.
- For senior pupils, if the class teacher decides that it is appropriate, students may bring their phones on school outings but they must be switched off and remain in their bags and used for emergencies only.
- Pupils should renew their Application to Carry a Mobile Phone Form if they update their phone.
- It is strongly advised that pupils use passwords/pin numbers to ensure that unauthorised phone calls cannot be made on their phones (e.g. by other pupils, or if stolen). Pupils must keep their password/pin numbers confidential. Mobile phone and/or passwords should not be shared.

Where a parent feels that their child having a phone in school is essential the following will apply:

- The school accepts no responsibility for replacing lost, stolen or damaged mobile phones, smart watches and electronic devices. The safety and security of mobile phones, smart watches and electronic devices is wholly a matter for pupils/parents.
- All phones brought to school must have a sticky label on the back with the child's name.
- The phone must be turned off before the school day starts (i.e. prior to 8.30am or from when the child first arrives on school grounds).
- Phones which are not switched off will be confiscated by the class-teacher and returned only to the parent/guardian - at the end of the school-day.
- The school will not be liable for the replacement of lost, stolen or damaged devices.
- The Electronic Device Policy is consistent with the Code of Behaviour Policy and inappropriate use of mobile phones or any electronic equipment will be treated as "serious misbehaviour" in accordance with the Code of Behaviour policy.
- Taking photographs or video footage with a mobile phone or electronic device of either other pupils or teachers or sharing inappropriate messages will be regarded as "serious misbehaviour" and sanctions will apply according to the school's Code of Behaviour Policy.
- If images of other pupils or teachers have been taken, the phone/electronic device will not be returned to the pupil until the images have been removed by the pupil in the presence of a teacher and parents/guardians.
- If a teacher has reason to believe that a mobile phone / electronic device has unsuitable material stored on it, pupils will be required to hand over the phone / electronic device to a teacher and parents/guardians will be asked to collect it from the school.

- Pupils using their own technology in school, such as leaving a mobile phone turned on or using it in class is in direct breach of the school's acceptable usage policy. Pupils sending nuisance text messages is in direct breach of the school's acceptable use policy.
- The unauthorised taking of images with a mobile phone camera or electronic device, still or moving is in direct breach of the school's acceptable usage policy.
- Please see AUP Policy and Code of Behaviour for further information

Where there is a suspicion that the material on the mobile 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.

Smart Watches

A smart watch by definition is a wearable computer in the form of a wristwatch. Many smart watches have the capability of receiving messages and calls as well as a number of other features. In this sense, smart watches are treated with the same respect as a mobile phone or other electronic device and are subject to the above guidelines for mobile phones and electronic devices.

Mobile Phones

Children are not permitted to bring mobile phones / electronic devices with them on school trips and tours. Parents will be able to contact the teacher in charge via the school office.

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, with 'vibrate' off.
- Mobile Phones should be kept in a safe, secure place.
- Staff may have need to use their personal mobile phone when taking school related photographs. Such images or video recordings should be transferred to the staff member's school laptop at the earliest possible convenience and then deleted from their personal device.
- Mobile phones will not be used for texting or phone calls within teaching / pupil contact time except in the case of emergency.
- Calls for school business e.g. checking a booking for school tour, making arrangements for sporting events etc. should be done on the school phone.
- If a situation arises whereby a staff member needs to be contactable please speak to Principal or DP and necessary arrangements will be put in place. Also ensure you provide persons with the school landline, in case they are unable to contact you.
- School phone should be used to contact parents.
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The Board of Management advises all staff to keep their personal mobile phone number and social networking sites private.

Guidelines for Parents

- The Staff and BOM recognise the parents as the child's primary educator and believe that parents have an important role to play in ensuring their child's appropriate and safe use of electronic devices
- Parents and guardians are encouraged to regularly check their child's online activity / digital footprint. Parents are encouraged to check social media apps (e.g. Facebook, Snapchat, Viber, WhatsApp, Instagram etc.) on mobile phones and electronic devices to ensure they are aware of their child's online interaction with others and approve of same.

- Parents/guardians are encouraged to talk with their child regularly about their use of electronic devices and discuss who their child is interacting with and the content of such interactions.

Sanctions

Misuse of electronic devices may result in disciplinary action, as outlined in the school's Code of Behaviour.

Pupils using mobile phones to bully other pupils or send offensive messages/calls will face disciplinary actions as per the School Code of Behaviour.

Sanctions can include written warnings, withdrawal of access privileges and, in extreme cases, suspension or expulsion.

The school also reserves the right to report any illegal activities to the appropriate authorities.

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, as with all such incidents, the school may consider it appropriate to involve the Gardaí.

Review

This policy was originally drafted in February 2008. The policy has been reviewed on several occasions in line with changing use of mobile phone and electronic device technology. It has last been reviewed in February 2020 and will be reviewed again in two years or before to cater for further changes in mobile phone and electronic device usage.

Ratification

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management of Primrose Hill National School on 18th February 2020.

Signed

Signed

Chairperson, Board of Management

School Principal

Issued: February 2008

Updated: June 2012, January 2019, February 2020