



# Scoil Naomh Molaise

Grange, Co. Sligo.

## Mobile Phone/Smart Device Policy

### Introduction

This policy was drawn up in response to technological advances, which have seen a significant increase in mobile phones/smart devices among the school population over recent years. It was written in the light of increased awareness of the dangers of cyber-bullying and the potential risks presented by easy access to mobile phones/smart devices (any other electronic device which can access the internet).

### Rationale

Across Ireland, the possession and use of mobile phones/smart devices by school aged children is now extensive, even children in primary school. Our core business of teaching and learning needs to be conducted in an environment free from unnecessary distractions, disruptions or cyber activities which mobile phones/smart devices can involve.

- Mobile phones, smart watches, iPods, gaming consoles, etc. are intrusive and distracting in a school environment.
- Some electronic devices may be harmful due to frequent use.
- Mobile phones/smart devices may be used to conduct bullying campaigns.
- The capacity of many devices to take photographs, make video or sound recordings could lead to child protection and data protection issues with regard to inappropriate capture, use or distribution of images.

In order to manage the issue of mobile phones and other smart devices, this policy has been developed.

### Aims and Objectives

On the grounds of Pastoral Care, Safeguarding and Child Protection, our school **strictly prohibits** pupils from bringing mobile phones and other smart devices to school. The use of mobile phones/smart devices is also forbidden on school trips and tours, and during extra-curricular activities. This is in order to create a safer environment and, to lesson intrusions on, and distractions to, children's learning.

### Internal School Procedures for Pupils and Parents/Guardians

The following are the guidelines for pupils and parents/guardians:

- Pupils are NOT allowed to bring mobile phones/smart devices to school.
- If a parent/guardian needs to contact their child during the school day, or a child needs to contact their parent/guardian, this is done via the school office.

- If a parent/guardian fails to turn up to collect a child at home-time, the pupil must come back into the school and a member of staff will contact the parent/guardian through the office.
- During out-of-school activities and school extra-curricular activities, teachers will retain a list of contacts should a parent/guardian need to be contacted.
- Any pupils who brings a mobile phone/smart device to school risks having it confiscated and not returned until the school day is over. **The confiscated item must be collected from the school office by the parent/guardian.**
- If a pupil is found using a mobile phone/smart device to take photographs or video footage of other pupils or staff or shares inappropriate messages via any electronic process, this will be regarded as a serious offence and disciplinary action will be taken in accordance with the school's Code of Behaviour.
- If images of other pupils or staff have been taken, the mobile phone/smart device will not be returned to the pupil until the images have been removed by the pupil in the presence of a teacher.
- It should be noted that it is criminal offence to use a mobile phone/personal device 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 contact An Garda Síochana.
- Any breaches to this policy will be dealt with in line with our school's Code of Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policy.
- The Board of Management does not accept any responsibility for the loss, damage or theft of any mobile phone or smart device on the school premises.

## School Trips and Outings

- Pupils are not permitted to bring mobile phones or other smart devices with them on school trips and tours. As above, any pupil who brings a mobile phone/smart device on a school trip or tour risks having it confiscated. **The confiscated item must be collected from the school office by the parent/guardian.**
- Teachers will have contact details for all pupils in the event it is necessary to make contact with a parent/guardian.
- Any breaches to this policy will be dealt with in line with our school's Code of Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policy.

## School Procedures for Staff

Mindful of the duties and responsibilities assigned to all staff when working with children, it is vital that all staff engage with pupils without distraction during the school day. In this context, access to personal mobile phones/smart devices should be limited to urgent use only.

- Staff have access to the school phone if contact needs to be made with parents/guardians. Where a lengthy conversation with parents/guardians is required, appointments should be made to meet parents/guardians.
- Classroom supervision is arranged if a class teacher has to phone other professionals or outside agencies in relation to a particular child during the school day.
- Staff personal calls are normally confined to break times, and should not take place in view of pupils, either in the classroom, around the school or on yard.
- Texting should follow the same principles as calls.
- Group messaging (Whatsapp, Aladdin etc.) is used as a communication tool to bring information on school-related matters to the attention of the staff. It should be confined to periods outside of class teaching time.

- On occasion, mobile phones may be used by staff to take photos e.g. on school tours. These should be deleted as soon as possible once printed or uploaded to the school website.
- Staff will never share their personal mobile number with pupils.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

- All members of staff share in the co-ordination and implementation of this policy.
- All aspects of this policy will be discussed with 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> class children by the class teacher, the principal and parents/guardians.
- Devices that are confiscated will be switched off and given to the Principal for safe-keeping. Parents/Guardians are expected to collect confiscated devices personally from the school office.

## **Evaluation**

This policy is monitored on an ongoing basis and amendments added as new technology comes on stream.

## **Ratification**

This policy was adopted and ratified by the Board of Management on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2025.

This policy will be reviewed on a two-year cycle.

Signed: *Fr Christy McHugh* (Chairperson, BOM)

Signed: *Louise O'Connor* (Principal/Secretary, BOM)

Date: 31.01.25