

Foxfield Special School



Phone Use Policy September 2025

Introduction

This policy outlines the procedures to be followed for phone use by staff members at St. Michael's House Special School Foxfield (Foxfield School).

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to give staff clear guidelines regarding the appropriate use of mobile phones in the workplace or while carrying out their duties in the school. It aims to ensure that phone usage does not interfere with the educational process and become a distraction to our work.

Rationale

Mindful of the duties and responsibilities assigned to staff working with pupils, it is vital that staff are engaged in always working with pupils throughout the school day and clear procedures must be outlined for this.

Also, the school has a duty to formally ensure the protection of privacy for pupils and staff and ensure the use of appropriate channels of communication between staff and parents.

SCHOOL RELATED CALLS

- Calls to parents / guardians should be kept as short as possible. Where a lengthy conversation with parents / guardians is deemed necessary, this call should be made after class time, or an appointment should be made to meet with parents / guardians.
- Staff should not give personal contact details to parents. In exceptional circumstances, staff should discuss this with the Principal prior to providing such details.
- Calls to other professionals and organisations should be made after class time or in consultation with the Principal so that classroom supervision can be arranged.

PERSONAL CALLS

- Access to personal phones should be limited to urgency / emergency and the use of the school WhatsApp groups only.
- In general, personal calls should only be made during staff break times.
- In cases of urgency / emergency, a staff member should use discretion in making calls.

- Incoming calls should be reserved for urgent matters only. They should be taken outside the classroom and away from pupils.

MOBILE PHONES

- The school supports the safe use of technology by the teachers and SNAs to help visual learners and communication.
- Staff are permitted to use mobile phones to check school related WhatsApp groups, and this practice will continue beyond 2025/2026.
- Staff are not permitted to use their mobile phones to make calls, surf the web, access social media or send texts during class time or for any other reason unrelated to school.
- Staff may use their mobile phones during breaks and lunchtimes.
- In cases of urgency, staff should follow the same rules in relation to personal calls.
- The same rules apply to texting / using phone internet i.e. staff break times only.
- In very exceptional circumstances (e.g. an ill family member) staff may, with the permission of the principal, have more phone access. An explanation should be given to the class in this case.
- For privacy & personal safety, teachers should only use the class phone or school phone when contacting parents. However, if personal phones must be used (for example if the class are on a tour/trip), the personal phone number should be withheld through the phone settings.
- Personal phones should not be used to store personal data of pupils.
- School and class phones **ONLY** should be used for school-related photography and to be used by school staff for school activities.
- Class phones will have a password to access the device. It will be used for educational purposes such as to take photographs necessary for recording of activities for assessment purposes and to send emails to parents/guardians. Photos can also be used on School social media and for Graduation, once permission from the parents has been given for use of photographs.
- The photographs on the class phone should be deleted at the end of every month.
- Class phones should be locked in a cupboard in the classroom at the end of each day.

WhatsApp Groups

1. **The whole School WhatsApp Group and Location WhatsApp Group (Swords and Kilbarrack)**
 - Staff are not required to join this WhatsApp group and must consent to joining.

- A new whole school WhatsApp group will be created every year and will use seven-day deletion.
- The Group can be used for; seeking resources from colleagues in other classes, lost and found and updates regarding damaged property.
- Where somebody decides not to join this WhatsApp group, they should request information relating to transitions, out of bounds areas and housekeeping from a colleague.

Whole School WhatsApp Group- Times/Purpose

8:30 – 8:45 - Housekeeping

Messages from Principal, School Management Team and Secretary and class teachers. These messages will relate to ongoings that staff should be made aware of; e.g. Maintenance work, late bus, school event, etc...

9.30- 2.50 PM – School Day

All staff may use the group for info re: difficult transitions, areas out of bounds, assistance required ONLY

2:25 – 2:45 PM- Housekeeping

A repeat of the morning process.

Other Times

Communication from Principal and School Management regarding matters of urgency only. This is to safeguard the wellbeing of staff.

Whole School WhatsApp Group- Language

- Language should be formal and to the point.
- The use of student's names is in breach of GDPR and their dignity. It is not permitted.

2. Class WhatsApp Groups, Teachers, SNAs, and Bus Escort WhatsApp Groups

- Staff are not required to join WhatsApp this group and must consent to joining
- Verbal consent is sufficient between members for Class WhatsApp groups, Teachers, SNAs, and Bus Escort groups.
- Class WhatsApp groups are required to use seven-day deletion.
- WhatsApp groups should only be used for necessary communication where there is no time to reach other parties in person.
- Class WhatsApp groups should only be used when the class is separated.
- Language should be formal and to the point.

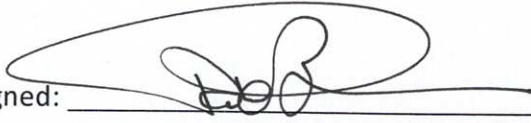
REVIEW OF THIS POLICY

This policy will be reviewed as deemed necessary by the Board of Management

IMPLEMENTATION AND COMMUNICATION OF THIS POLICY

The Board of Management ratified this policy on _____. A copy will be given to all staff in the school and a master copy will be kept under the policies section of the School Plan.

Signed: _____



Chairperson, Board of Management

Date: _____

22/09/2025.