



CASTLEBAR EDUCATE TOGETHER
NATIONAL SCHOOL

Castlebar Educate Together National School

Mobile Phone and Smart Device Policy

Introduction:

This policy was devised in June 2022, following the publication of DES Circular 0038/2018. It was drafted in consultation with staff, pupils and parents of Castlebar ETNS.

Rationale:

The purpose of this policy is to acknowledge the benefits of mobile phones and smart devices, but to also highlight the risks associated with their use and to provide guidance to the school community for such.

The promotion of digital technologies for teaching, learning and assessment is a priority of the Department of Education and Skills. Research shows that digital technologies can play a positive role in supporting high quality teaching, learning and assessment. The use of tablet devices and smart phones is now an integral part of the lives of children and young people. The school's Digital Learning Plan and Acceptable Usage Policy outlines how digital technologies will be used in the school to enhance teaching, learning and assessment.

However, concerns have been identified including some risks associated with the misuse, abuse and possible overuse of these devices. Children and young people need to be guided and supported to become good digital citizens.

- Some potential challenges/risks associated with the use of mobile phones and smart devices include:
- Use of mobile phones and smart devices with integrated cameras could lead to child protection and data protection issues with regard to inappropriate capture, use or distribution of images.
- Mobile phones and smart devices can be valuable items and could potentially be damaged in school or may render a pupil vulnerable to theft.
- Mobile phones and smart devices may make pupils objects of envy or disparagement and could have implications with regard to discipline and potential bullying.
- Mobile phones and other smart devices can be very intrusive, distracting and antisocial when used in a school environment.

Aims and Objectives:

The aim of this policy is:

1. to inform all members of our school community about the appropriate use of mobile phones and smart devices at our school.
2. to outline the procedures and processes associated with this policy.

Definition of Smart Devices:

A smart device is an electronic device, generally connected to other devices or networks via different wireless protocols such as Bluetooth, NFC, Wi-Fi, LiFi, 3G, etc. Examples of smart devices include but are not limited to iPads, tablets, mobile phones, smart watches, digital cameras, smart glasses, Kindles and gaming devices.



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Guidelines:

The Mobile Phone & Smart Devices Policy is consistent with the school's Code of Good Behaviour, Anti-Bullying, Child Safeguarding, Data Protection and Acceptable Usage Policies. Any inappropriate use of mobile phones and/or smart devices (i.e. any breach of this policy) will be treated in accordance with these policies.

Pupils: Students must not use phones at all during the course of the school day, 8:50 to 14:30.

SMART DEVICES

- Pupils are not permitted to bring smart devices to school. These include, but are not limited to iPods, iPads, tablets, smart watches, digital cameras, mobile phones, Kindles, gaming devices.
- In exceptional circumstances, members of the ISM (In-School Management) Team, in consultation with teaching staff, may give permission to pupils to bring and use smart devices in school - Assistive Technology equipment for example

MOBILE PHONES

- Pupils do not need mobile phones at school and are requested not to bring them to school. We ask for parents' co-operation in this matter.
- If, however, a parent feels that their child genuinely needs to bring their phone to school, this will be permitted from 3rd – 6th Class. In such a case, parents must complete the permission form (Appendix 1) in full and return it to the school before their child brings a mobile phone to school. Pupils from Junior Infants – 2nd Class are not permitted to bring a mobile phone to school, under any circumstances.
- If a mobile phone is deemed absolutely necessary and the relevant form has been signed, pupils must adhere to the following procedures:
 1. **Switch off their phone at the outer school gates, when entering the school grounds in the morning.**
 2. **The phone can be switched on again at the outer gates, when they leave the school grounds.**
 3. **When they turn off their phone, they should put it away securely. At no time are the school responsible for the loss/damage/theft of mobile phones.**
 4. **It is the pupil's responsibility to switch off their phone and put it away.**
- If any pupil brings a mobile phone to school, without permission from the principal/class teacher, that phone will be confiscated and kept in the office until a parent comes to collect it.
- Even with permission, if a pupil is found with/using a phone during school hours, or if their phone rings/beeps in the classroom, that phone will also be taken to the office and the parents will be asked to come and collect the phone.
- In the event of the pupil continuously breaking the above rules, the ISM will inform parents that the pupil is no longer permitted to bring their mobile phone to school.

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.



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- Parents/carers are encouraged to regularly check their child's mobile phone/smart devices activity. Parents are encouraged to check social media apps (e.g. Facebook, Snapchat, TicTok, 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/carers 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.
- Parents are encouraged to attend internet safety talks held in the school.
- Parents must complete a Mobile Phone consent form in full and return it to the school if they wish their child to be permitted to bring a mobile phone to school.
- Parents are reminded that in cases of emergency, the school office remains the only point of contact to ensure their child is reached quickly, and helped in any appropriate way. This is also the point of contact should the school or a pupil need to contact a parent.
- If a staff member has reason to believe that a mobile phone has unsuitable material stored on it, pupils will be required to hand over the phone to a teacher and parents will be asked to collect it from the school. 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.
- The school accepts no responsibility for lost, stolen or damaged mobile phones (including at school, and travelling to and from school). The safety and security of mobile phones is wholly a matter for pupils/parents
- Parents are not permitted to use their own mobile phones for photographic purposes on the school grounds, with the exception of only photographing their own child. This is for reasons of Data Protection and Child Safeguarding.
- Where parents do provide a mobile phone for their child, they are strongly encouraged to buy a **basic phone only**, rather than a smart phone with a camera and access to internet and social media platforms.

Staff:

- Staff working directly with children must keep their phones on 'silent' during teaching time/yard duty.
- Phone calls may not be made or taken and text messages may not be sent or read during teaching time/yard duty unless in exceptional circumstances, and where the staff member has informed a member of the ISM team, where possible.
- If a staff member needs to make/take an important call they may organise supervision for their pupils and leave the room to do so.
- In certain situations, staff may use their phone during lessons to access lesson content/resources/other school-related material when it is not possible to access the teaching PC.
- Teachers are encouraged to be discerning in their use of mobile phones as an educational tool during class.
- Staff should view themselves as role-models for the appropriate use of mobile phones in front of pupils.
- Staff members who use their mobile phones/smart device to take photographs of pupils/their work must consult the Data Protection policy in this regard. All such photos must be deleted by the end of that week and uploaded to the school's password protected Google Drive where relevant. Staff are also responsible for ensuring that all such photos are also deleted from their 'recently deleted' album, where relevant.
- Staff members must never upload photos/videos of pupils to a staff Whatsapp group or to any other platforms of their personal social media.



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Consultation and communication regarding the plan:

This policy was drawn up in consultation with staff, pupils and parents. The attention of all new families will be drawn to this policy upon registration in the school. All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan by the Principal and Deputy Principal.

This policy will be published on the school website and provided to the Home/School Association. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department of Education and Skills and the Patron, if requested. Hard copies of this, and all school policies, are available at the school on request.

Ratification of the plan:

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management June 2022, and will be reviewed in June 2026. It may be reviewed at an earlier date, to reflect changes in legislation or in other school policies (e.g. review of Child Safeguarding or Data Protection policies).

Signed: _____ (Chairperson, BOM)

Signed: _____ (School Principal)

Date: June 2022 Date of next review: June 2024



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Appendix 1: Mobile Phone Permission Form

Name of Pupil:

Pupil's mobile phone number:
(for policy monitoring and Child Safeguarding):

I believe that my child needs to bring their mobile phone to school each day because:

I agree that my child will:

- Switch off his/her phone each morning before they enter the school grounds and will store appropriately at 8:50 am
- Not use their phone on school grounds.
- Have their phone confiscated if it is used inappropriately. The phone will be kept in the office until I collect it.
- Follow all the procedures and rules outlined in the CETNS Acceptable Use Policy and Code of Good Behaviour Policy in relation to the use of mobile phones and smart devices.
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I agree to: all guidelines, procedures and rules set out in the school's Mobile Phone and Smart Devices policy, including that the school takes no responsibility for lost, stolen or damaged phones (either at school, or on the way to and from school)

Signature of Parent/Carer/Guardian:

Signature of Pupil:

Date: