

MOBILE PHONE & ELECTRONIC DEVICE **POLICY**



SCOIL CHAITRIONA

Signed: _____

(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: _____

(Principal)

Date: _____

Date: _____

Introduction

This policy has been formulated in conjunction with **Circular 0038/2018** issued by the Department of Education and Skills, titled; ‘**Consultation with the School Community including Teachers, Students and Parents on the use of smart phones and tablet devices in school**’ and ‘**Keeping Childhood Smartphone Free**’ published by the Minister in November 2023.

At Scoil Chaitríona, our Mobile Phone and Electronic Device Policy outlines how our school seeks to promote best practice in relation to the use of mobile phones and electronic devices. While appreciating that the possession and use of mobile phones by school pupils is now extensive, even in the primary school sector, we also believe that in order for teaching and learning to be optimised, we must seek to ensure, in so far as is possible, that the learning environment is free from unnecessary distractions or disruptions related to the use of mobile phones and personal electronic devices.

While we in Scoil Chaitríona are committed to ensuring our students are provided with essential opportunities to develop fundamental skills in the use of the internet, digital technologies and electronic devices (as outlined in the schools Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) and Digital Learning Plan), we are also aware of the potential dangers associated with overuse of mobile phones and personal electronic devices, such as lack of face to face social interaction, lack of physical activity and the potential for bullying. As a school which seeks to develop all our students in a holistic way, we feel that this policy, in conjunction with our Acceptable Use Policy, outlines how we can effectively develop our students capacity to function competently and safely in an increasingly digital world, while at the same time ensuring opportunities for physical and social development are not interfered with as a result of over exposure to mobile phones and electronic devices.

Aims:

- To lessen intrusions on and distractions to children’s learning during the school day.
- To ensure children have maximum opportunities to socialise positively and engage in physical activity during break times.
- To highlight to our students the importance of responsible and appropriate use of mobile phones and electronic devices

Rationale

The possession and use of mobile phones/smart phones by school pupils is now extensive, even in the primary school sector.

Our core business of teaching and learning needs to be conducted in an environment free from unnecessary distractions or disruptions. The use of mobile phones and personal devices (iPods, iPads, PSPs, MP3s etc.) presents a number of problems that can prove intrusive and distracting in a school environment. They can be used to cause discipline problems or as a means of bullying others. 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 etc. In order to manage the issue of mobile phones, and other personal devices, this policy has been developed.

Relationship to Our School Ethos

The use of personal mobile/smart phones and other electronic devices contravenes the provision of a safe and secure school environment, a provision that is central to the mission statement and ethos of Scoil Chaitríona.

This policy was prepared in consultation with the staff, parents and Board of Management in Scoil Chaitríona in order to clarify the rules regarding the student's use of mobile phones and electronic devices during school time and school related activities outside of regular school time. School Management is introducing a policy that prohibits the use by students of personal mobile/smart phones, and other personal devices, while on school premises or involved in school activities such as tours, trips or extra-curricular activities. This is in order to create a safer environment and to lessen intrusions on, and distractions to, children's learning.

School Guidelines

The following procedures have been put in place to ensure minimal and safe usage of mobile phones and electronic devices in our school;

- The use of personal mobile/smart phones and other personal devices by **children** who attend the school is **not allowed** while the children are in the care of the school staff, while at school, on trips from the school or involved in extra-curricular activities. The children should, therefore, **not bring mobile phones and other personal devices to school or when engaging in school-related activities.**
- Children who need to contact home during school hours may do so through the school secretary using the school landline phone (071 9851062)
- Parents are reminded that in cases of emergency, the school office remains the first point of contact and can ensure that your child is reached quickly and a message passed onto them.

In the event that a parent thinks that their child having a phone in school is essential, the following will apply:

- Parents must send a letter to the Principal requesting that their child be permitted to bring his/her mobile phone/device to school. The letter should be addressed to the Principal and should indicate clearly the necessity for their child having a mobile phone at school. This letter will be kept on file and presented to the Chairperson of the Board of Management. One letter per school year must be issued. The decision of the Board of Management in relation to such requests is final.
- For medical reasons, a child may need to have a mobile phone for 'diabetes readings/scanning', the same procedures outline will be adhered to.
- **The phone must be turned off throughout the school day and stored in the pupil's bag.** Scoil Chaitríona accepts no liability for phones lost/stolen/damaged while on the school premises/grounds.
- The child's name must be attached to the back of the phone for identity purposes.

School Procedures

- Any child found to have a phone/personal devices in school without a parental letter will have the phone/device confiscated by the class teacher and presented to the Principal. The principal will store it in the school office. The phone will not be returned until a parent/guardian collects it. Similarly, the use of all personal electronic devices is not **permitted** during the school day - this includes arrival, class time, breaks and dismissal.
- Where a pupil is found by a member of staff to be using a mobile phone or other personal device for any purpose, it will be confiscated from the pupil, given to the principal and returned only when the parent/guardian collects it.
- The school will not be liable for **replacing** mobile phones or other devices that are lost, stolen or damaged.
- Additionally, the school staff and Board of Management will ensure that educational talks and information will be provided for pupils, parents and staff so as to ensure pupils, parents and staff are educated on the risks associated with mobile phones, tablets or internet enabled devices – such as cyber bullying, social media security and content. **Internet Safety Day** will be celebrated annually in the school. Again, this is keeping with the schools Acceptable Use Policy. Children and parents will be informed of the resources such as www.webwise.ie as outlined by the Department of Education and Skills.
- The school incorporates this policy into the Code of Behaviour and Discipline and Acceptable Use Policy, and will treat breaches in the same manner as any other breach of these policies.
- If a pupil uses a mobile phone or personal device to take photographs, video footage or recording of other pupils or staff members, or shares inappropriate messages this will be regarded as a Level 2 or Level 3 inappropriate behaviour, and disciplinary action will be taken in accordance with the School's Code of Behaviour.

Guidelines and Procedures for Staff:

- All staff should have their phones on them during the school day on case of emergency.
- It is acknowledged that teachers and SNAs may need to be contactable by their family/their own children's school etc. during the day. Staff personal calls on their mobile phones may be answered in cases of such emergencies.
- The Principal/Deputy Principal may have her/his mobile phone turned on at all times when in classrooms, so that they are contactable by the office/staff (in case of emergency) at all times.
- Staff personal mobile phones may also be used to contact the Principal/office in the case of an emergency in the classroom/yard/school outings etc.
- Staff personal calls and texts are ordinarily confined to break times (but **not** while on yard duty).
- Classroom supervision is usually organised if a class teacher has to contact other professionals or outside agencies in relation to a particular child.
- The organisation of school events such as sporting games, events etc. and calls relating to school business may also be received and made on teacher's personal phones during the school day, as well as the school landline.

It should be noted that it is a 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 involve the Gardaí.

School Trips and Outings

- Children are not permitted to bring mobile phones and other personal devices with them on school trips and tours.

- Teachers will have a contact number for each parent in the event that it is necessary to make contact with a parent/guardian.
- Children are not permitted to bring any other form of electronic device with them on school tours or trips.
- Children may **not** bring cameras with them on school trips and tours. The school digital camera will be brought on school trips and tours for the purpose of taking photos.
- Any pupil found using a mobile phone/electronic device/camera at after school activities or on school trips or tours will have them confiscated and such devices will not be returned until a parent/guardian collects them.

Roles and Responsibilities:

- All aspects of this policy will be discussed with all children by the class teacher, the principal and parents/guardians.
- The class teacher will have a list of the children who have permission from the Board of Management to bring a mobile phone and/or an electronic device to school.
- Devices that are confiscated will be switched off and given to the principal for safe-keeping.
- This policy will form part of the school's Code of Behaviour.
- Any breach of this policy will be treated in the same way as any breach of the school's Code of Behaviour.
- Children using mobile phones or electronic devices to bully other children or send offensive messages/calls outside school which impacts a child/children in school will be investigated and both sets of parents/guardians will be notified.

A copy of the Mobile phone and Devices Policy is made available to school personnel and to the Parents' Association. The policy is readily accessible to parents on request. A copy of the policy is also published on the school website at www.scoilchaitrionaballyshannon.ie

Review Procedure

The policy will be reviewed regularly in the light of experience. It will be reviewed by the full staff and Board of Management every three years or when any adjustments to procedures need to be implemented. Next review of this policy will occur during the school year of 2026/2027.

Ratification of Policy:

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on _____.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Chairperson Board of Management

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Principal