



Ballinteer Educate Together National School

Mobile Phone and Electronic Devices Policy

Introductory Statement

This policy has been developed in response to technological advances which have seen a significant increase in hand held electronic devices amongst the school population over recent years. This policy is informed by the school's Code of Behaviour and the Anti-bullying, Anti-Cyber- Bullying, Child Protection, Data Protection and ICT Acceptable Usage Policies.

Rationale

The possession and use of mobile phones by school pupils is now extensive, even in the primary school sector. Notwithstanding the many educational benefits that the use of technology presents in our school, our core business of teaching and learning needs to be conducted in an environment free from unnecessary distractions or disruptions. Therefore the school strongly discourages the bringing of mobile phones and electronic devices to school by students.

In particular circumstances, parents may wish to allow their child to bring a mobile phone to school. The school is prepared to allow mobile phones on the premises but only within the parameters of the policy as stated below.

The use of mobile phones (particularly with the advent of increasingly sophisticated equipment and camera phones) presents a number of problems, including:

- Mobile phones are a potential and real source of bullying and abuse through texting and the dissemination of unacceptable and inappropriate images
- Mobile phones can be valuable items and might render a pupil vulnerable to theft
- Mobile phones (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
- The use of mobiles phones could be potentially undermining of classroom discipline
- Use of mobile phones and other electronic devices with integrated cameras could lead to child protection and data protection issues with regard to inappropriate capture, use or distribution of images
- Many of the above issues also pertain to iPads, etc.
- Strategies must be put in place to reduce the intrusiveness of unauthorised technology in a school situation
- Some electronic devices may be harmful due to frequent use
- Mobile phones may be used to conduct bullying campaigns

Relationship to School Ethos

The unauthorized use of mobile phones and other electronic devices contravenes the provision of a safe and secure school environment conducive to learning, a provision which is central to the mission statement and ethos of Ballinteer Educate Together National School.

Aims

- To inform all members of our school community about the appropriate use of mobile phones at our school.
- To outline the procedures and processes of this policy.
- To lessen intrusions on and distractions to children's learning.

Internal School Procedures

The following are the guidelines for mobile phone / electronic devices usage in the school.

Mobile phone use by children

1. We discourage pupils from bringing mobile phones to school. Where a pupil does bring a mobile phone to school, the phone must remain switched off during the school day (not on silent) and may not be used, for any purpose, on school premises, grounds or during off-site school activities (such as school swimming or sports activities). Phones must be stored securely and discreetly by the pupil in their school bag.
2. These procedures also apply to electronic watches (Apple watches, Track-it watches etc.) and any similar electronic devices that have the capability to make or receive calls and/or send and receive messages and/or notifications. Where such devices cannot be switched off (not on silent) they will not be allowed in school.
3. Where a parent feels that their child having a phone/ electronic watch in school is essential the following will apply: Parents must send the principal a letter/ email requesting that their child be permitted to bring his/her mobile phone/ watch to school. One letter/ email per school year. The letter/ email may be handed in to the school secretary or sent to info@ballinteeretns.ie. This request, if approved, will be kept on file. The Board of Management reserves the right to revoke this permission at any time.
4. The school holds no responsibility for phones or devices lost, stolen or damaged in school, on school grounds or on external school visits.
5. Personal electronic devices, tablets, ipods, ipads (or similar) are not allowed in school, unless otherwise stated through an email from the class teacher or principal.
6. Where the presence of mobile phones or electronic devices is causing disruption to the orderly running of the classroom, a class teacher may choose to collect mobile phones/ devices at the beginning of the school day to be returned at home time. In such cases, the class teacher will keep mobile phones/ devices in his/her desk drawer or filing cabinet. No responsibility will be taken for lost, stolen or damaged phones or devices in such instances.
7. Children who need to contact home in an emergency during school hours may do so through their class teacher/ the school office using the school landline phone.
8. A parent/ guardian who needs to contact their child during the school day should do so through the school office landline. Parents are reminded that children will not be allowed to turn on their phone/ device on school premises to receive texts or messages.
9. Failure to adhere to the rules outlined in this policy will, in the first instance, result in the phone/ device being confiscated by the class teacher or principal and returned to the child at the end of the school day. On second or subsequent offences, the device will be confiscated and only returned to a parent or guardian. Parents/ guardians will be informed that their child's phone/ device has been confiscated.
10. If a pupil is found taking photographs or video footage or making audio recordings with a mobile phone or electronic device in school, on school grounds or on external school

visits, this will be regarded as a serious offence and disciplinary action will be taken according to the school's Code of Behaviour.

Mobile phone use by staff

1. During teaching time, while on playground duty and during meetings, mobile phones will be put on 'silent' or 'discreet' mode.
2. The use of personal mobile phones by staff for specific school-related purposes is permitted. This includes the sending and receiving of messages on the staff group messaging app or directly to colleagues for the arrangement of yard issues on rainy days, requests for assistance from the principal/ colleagues, the timely dissemination of school-related messages. This messaging app is not and will not be used for the sharing of sensitive information relating to the school's students.
3. The use of mobile phones for personal matters is not permitted during teaching time, while on playground duty and during meetings. This includes sending or receiving messages, making or receiving phone calls or accessing social media platforms. In very exceptional circumstances (e.g. an ill family member) the staff member may, with the permission of the principal, make use of their mobile phone. In such instances, every effort should be made to ensure that such use takes place outside of teaching time.
4. Staff are reminded to be careful when using their personal mobile phones to contact parents. For privacy and personal safety, teachers should use the school phone or if personal phone must be used, the personal phone number should be withheld through the phone settings.
5. Where mobile phones are used to take photographs or video footage for school-related business, staff are requested to delete these images from their phone as soon as possible. School tablets or school cameras should be used for official school photography wherever possible.

Roles and Responsibilities

All staff, parents and pupils share in the co-ordination and implementation of this policy.

All staff, parents & pupils have a responsibility for appropriately using electronic devices and phones.

Evaluation

This policy is monitored on an ongoing basis and amendments added as new technology comes on stream or where specific circumstances warrant it.

Implementation

This policy has been in place since November 2018. It will continue to be implemented following ratification.

Ratification:

Date: _____

Chairperson - On Behalf of the Board of Management