

Bunscoil Clochar Mhuire

St Mary's Primary School

Digital Devices Policy

Introduction and Rationale

The possession and use of mobile phones, in particular smart phones, smart watches and other digital devices, by primary school pupils, is now extensive. The use of mobiles/smart phones/smart watches and other digital devices present a number of problems that can prove intrusive and distracting in a school environment. Furthermore, their misuse can lead to discipline problems. The capacity of many devices to take photographs, make video and sound recordings can be problematic in relation to child protection and data protection issues. While we recognise the challenges posed by digital technology in the lives of our pupils, we cannot ignore the immense benefits of such technology. For that reason and in line with our Acceptable Usage Policy, we encourage the use of the school's digital devices by pupils to enhance their learning experiences. This policy has been drawn up to enable better management of mobiles/smart phones/smart watches and digital devices in our school.

Aims

Our policy aims to:

- limit, within reason, the negative distractions mobiles, smart phones, smart watches and other digital devices can have on pupils' learning at school.
- enable pupils to use digital devices in a responsible manner.
- ensure parents/guardians become more informed about the inherent risks of digital device usage by pupils.

Guidelines for Pupils

- Pupils are not allowed to take out, turn on or use mobiles/smart phones/smart watches or other personal digital devices while on the school premises or on school trips. Our motto is, *“If it’s out, it’s on. If it’s on, it’s gone!”*
- Pupils involved in ‘after-school’ activities, including sport, music, choir, homework club and drama, may not turn on any personal digital devices until they have left the school premises.
- Pupils may not use their mobiles/smart phones/smart watches or any other personal device to take photographs, video footage or a voice recording of any pupil or staff member in the school environs or while away from the school during school time.
- Parents/guardians who need to contact a pupil during school hours should do so by phoning the school office.
- Pupils who need to contact home during school hours may do so by using the school landline, with prior permission from the teacher or another member of staff. There are landline connections in all classrooms and in the secretary’s office. The school mobile may, at the discretion of the teacher, be used by pupils to contact parents/guardians during trips away from the school grounds.
- The staff and Board of Management assume no responsibility for the loss, damage or theft of any personal digital device belonging to a pupil.

Consequences of Breaching ‘Pupil Guidelines’

First Incident

- Any pupil who brings a mobile/smart phone/smart watch and/or any other digital device to school, and takes it out or turns it on, risks having it confiscated. The device will be stored in the principal’s office and must be picked up in person by a parent/guardian.

Second Incident

- Any pupil whose mobile/smart phone/smart watch/digital device is confiscated for a second time within an academic year will receive detention for one day (during both break-times) and the phone/digital device will be confiscated for one week. A parent/guardian must call to the school to collect the phone, once a week has elapsed.

Third and Subsequent Incidents

- Any pupil whose mobile/smart phone/smart watch/digital device is confiscated for a third time will be banned from bringing all digital devices to school. Pupils may face suspension from school and/or may also be refused permission to participate in school excursions and tours.
- The school reserves the right to check pupils' schoolbags/coats for digital devices if deemed necessary.

Guidelines for Teachers, SNAs and Other Staff

- All teaching staff and SNAs should have their personal digital devices on silent during class time and during parent-teacher meetings.
- Teachers and SNAs who wish to make/receive personal calls and/or send/read texts must do so during break times (except during yard duty).
- Members of staff (i.e. teacher, SNA, other staff) must not take photos or video recordings of a pupil or a group of pupils using a personal mobile/smart phone or any other personal digital device.
- The personal mobiles/smart phones of staff may be used to contact the principal or the office in the case of an emergency in the classroom, yard, church, public playground etc.
- Teachers should ordinarily use the school landline or the school mobile to contact other professionals or outside agencies and when organising school events e.g. sport, excursions etc. However, in some circumstances, it is recognised that teachers may need to make contact with or receive school-related calls/messages from a third party on their personal mobiles.

Guidelines for Parents/Guardians

- Parents/guardians must switch off /silence all mobiles/smart phones/smart watches and other digital devices in advance of a parent-teacher meeting.
- In line with the recent GDPR regulations, parents/guardians and other family members are not permitted to take photos or videos recordings using smart phones or other personal digital devices at assemblies or other school events.
- All phone calls made between parents/guardians and pupils during the day must be made via the school landline.
- During school trips, a parent/guardian may need to contact a pupil/pupils and can do so by calling the school mobile. The number will be provided to parents/guardians in advance.

- Parents/guardians will be contacted via text/email should there be a delay in a tour bus arriving back at school.
- The ***Digital Devices Policy*** is available for viewing on the school website and in homework journals.

Pupils and the School’s Digital Devices

The Digital Strategy for Schools 2015-2020 envisages “the potential of digital technologies to enhance teaching, learning and assessment so that Ireland’s young people become engaged thinkers, active learners, knowledge constructors and global citizens.” At St Mary’s we encourage the appropriate and monitored use of digital technology to enhance our pupils’ learning. The appropriate use of our digital devices is dictated by the school’s Acceptable Usage Policy. Pupil engagement with the school’s tablets, I-pads and other digital devices is carried out under the guidance and supervision of the teacher. While we actively encourage the use of digital technology by pupils, their online safety is paramount at all times and we have a number of measures in place to enhance the safety of pupils’ when they are online.

Online Safety

- We promote safer internet usage among our pupils through our participation in the Webwise programme (webwise.ie).
- An assembly takes place for 5th and 6th Classes at the beginning of each academic year to highlight the issues contained within the ***Digital Devices Policy***. Periodic reminders of some aspects of the policy will be undertaken in the senior classes during the academic year.
- The school invites an appropriate cyber expert to the school on an annual basis to speak with pupils, parents and staff. The purpose of these workshops and presentations is to inform everyone about the constant and rapidly changing cyber world, together with the risks associated with mobiles/smart phones/smart watches and other digital devices. The daytime workshops are specifically aimed at pupils from 3rd to 6th Classes. An information evening is held annually for parents, guardians and staff.