

MOBILE PHONE & ELECTRONIC DEVICE POLICY

This policy has been compiled with the assistance of information gathered from parents, students and staff of Ardscoil Rath Iomgháin. The use of mobile phones and unauthorised use of electronic devices (internet-connected devices) by pupils contravenes the provision of a safe and secure school environment conducive to learning in Ardscoil Rath Iomgháin. The use of mobile phones and unauthorised use of electronic devices in Ardscoil Rath Iomgháin is forbidden.

Students of Ardscoil Rath Iomgháin are not permitted to have or use mobile phones, other devices that can make and receive calls or messages or any internet-connected devices within the school premises (building and grounds) or on school activities/trips at any time with the exception of those specifically approved by the school for educational purposes.

1.1 Rationale

The following policy aims to maintain a safe and nurturing environment where the personal dignity and rights of all members of the school community are preserved in line with our school ethos, “Achieve, Respect, Develop”. This policy has been put in place in order that teaching and learning can take place without interruption and also with the intention of protecting all members of the school community. In Ardscoil Rath Iomgháin teaching and learning needs to be conducted in an environment free from unnecessary distractions or disruptions.

Excessive screen time inhibits the development of social skills. When students spend more time using mobile phones and electronic devices, it means they have less time interacting face to face with other students. In Ardscoil Rath Iomgháin we believe that prohibiting the use of mobile phones and unauthorised electronic devices provides students with more opportunities to develop their social skills through face-to-face social interactions.

1.2 Aims

School Management has developed this 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, student's learning. Therefore, students must not bring mobile phones and other personal devices to school or when engaging in school-related activities.

1.3 Rationale for No Mobile Phones & Unauthorised Electronic Devices

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

1. Mobile phones and internet-connected devices can be valuable items and might render a student vulnerable to theft.
2. Mobile phones and internet-connected devices (and their cost and level of sophistication – or otherwise) can make students objects of envy or disparagement and could have implications with regard to discipline and potential bullying.
3. Mobile phones and internet-connected devices can be used to conduct bullying campaigns.
4. Mobile phones and unauthorised internet-connected devices can be intrusive and distracting in a school environment.
5. Mobile phones and unauthorised internet-connected devices can be used to cause discipline problems.
6. Even when apparently silent, the use of mobile phones for texting purposes could be potentially undermining classroom discipline.
7. Mobile phones and internet-connected devices can provide access to cameras and the internet giving students opportunity to view and disseminate inappropriate images. Use of mobile phones and internet-connected devices with integrated cameras could lead to child protection and data protection issues with regard to inappropriate capture, use or distribution of images.

8. Many of the above issues also pertain to I-Pods, Game Boys, PSPs, smart watches etc. They can be very intrusive, distracting and antisocial in a school environment. Strategies must be put in place to prevent the intrusiveness of mobile phones and internet-connected devices in school situations.

In order to manage the issue of mobile phones, and other personal devices, this policy has been developed.

1.4 Electronic Devices as an Educational Tool

- The use of digital technologies under the guidance of their teacher can be invaluable in equipping children with the skills to navigate the online world safely and support them to become responsible digital citizens.
- Where the use of an electronic device has been specifically recommended for a student and approved by the school, this can offer valuable support for their learning.
- Approved devices may include those recommended in an educational report or devices sanctioned by the school to enhance learning.

1.5 Internal School Procedures

- 1. Mobile Phones/electronic Devices/internet-connected devices (whether on or off) are not permitted on the school campus which includes school buildings and environs. This also applies to all school related activities/trips that occur on-site and off-site in the name of the school.**
2. In exceptional circumstances, a member of senior management may give permission to students to bring phones on trips/activities for specifically outlined uses. Prior notice of this will be given.

3. Should a parent need to contact a child;

- The office may be phoned, and a message passed onto the student in question.
- 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.

4. Should a pupil need to contact home;

- The office phone is available for urgent calls.
- Students should request permission from the Principal or Deputy Principals before using the school phone.
- We recommend that students only ring home when necessary and not as a means of requesting friends to visit or looking for books, PE gear etc. We promote student responsibility and encourage this through students organising their own belongings insofar as is possible.

5. School Trips and Outings;

- Students are not permitted to bring mobile phones with them on school trips and tours. A contact number (school's mobile phone) may be provided for parents which can be used by them to contact the teacher on specific trips.

1.6 Sanctions

Where students bring a mobile phone to school;

Students who ignore the spirit of this policy and bring a mobile phone/unauthorised electronic device to school, whether they use it or not, will be required to hand over their phone to a member of staff or senior management.

- In the first instance; the mobile phone (with sim card) and or any unauthorised electronic device will be confiscated for the remaining duration of the school day, irrespective of the time confiscated. Students will collect mobile phones (with sim card) or any unauthorised electronic device at the end of the school day from senior management. **A one day suspension will apply for the breach of this school rule. Parents will be contacted in relation to the suspension.**

- In the second instance and or subsequent offences, the mobile phone including sim card and or any unauthorised electronic device will be confiscated. **A two-day suspension will be given for this continuous breach of school rules. Parents will be contacted in relation to the suspension.**

- **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 student uses a mobile phone, personal device, or approved school device within school hours and outside school hours to take:**

- 1. unauthorised/inappropriate photographs**
- 2. video footage**
- 3. recording of other students or staff members**
- 4. or shares and/or shows content**

This will be regarded as a serious breach of school rules.

Disciplinary action will be taken in accordance with the School's Code of Positive Behaviour.

1.7 Retrieval of Confiscated Property:

- The student can collect the confiscated mobile phone/electronic device from a member of senior management at the end of the school day. The mobile phone or an unauthorized electronic device will be available for collection from the principal's or deputy principals office.
- The school has the right to ensure insofar as is practicable that the mobile phone/electronic device contains no images, recordings, screenshots or information which could compromise any member of the school community. Where there is a suspicion, the school reserves the right to look through the phone with the parent and student present, to ensure that the privacy of all members of the school community are respected.
- Using a mobile phone or any unauthorised electronic device to take pictures/images, and/or record video/audio of others and/or share images/videos of others without their consent can seriously infringe on peoples' privacy and rights. In these cases, the school will follow the Code of Positive Behaviour to deal with such instances. Sanctions will apply. Where there is suspicion of a serious breach of a member of the school community's rights, the school will use their discretion to determine if the input of An Garda Síochána needs to be sought. An Garda Síochána may also be contacted where the school has concerns in relation to material on a mobile phone or any unauthorised electronic device.
- If the school has concerns regarding a child protection issue relating to content/information on the mobile phone/electronic device, the issue will be reported to Tulsa and An Garda Síochána.
- Incidents where students use a mobile phone to bully others by sending offensive, hurtful, inappropriate messages, images, calls, videos and or audio recordings will be investigated under the "Anti-Bullying Policy" by the school. It should be noted that it is a criminal offence to use a mobile phone/electronic device to menace, harass or offend another person. This form of bullying behaviour can include:
 - sending or sharing nasty, insulting, offensive, and/or intimidating messages or images via, social media, text messages, emails, direct messages or other websites or apps.

- posting information considered to be personal, private and sensitive without consent
- Even though a message may be posted online just once by a student it can be considered bullying behaviour as it may be seen by a wide audience where it is intended to be shared or has a likelihood of being shared multiple times and is thus repeated.

- Any material taken, recorded or stored on a mobile phone or any unauthorised electronic device of any member of the school community must be deleted immediately. This rule protects the privacy of all members of the school community. An Garda Síochána may be contacted if a student refuses to delete this material.

1.8 Students who refuse to hand up their phone:

- Any student refusing to hand up their mobile phone/device for the duration required (see 1.6) will be suspended for an additional day.

The school reserves the right to ensure that the phone/device contains no images, recordings, photos or information which could compromise any member of the school community, before the student leaves the school premises (see 1.6). The student will only be re-admitted after a meeting with one of his/ her parents/ guardians with a member of senior management . A commitment must be given that no further breaches will occur.

1.9 Roles and Responsibilities

All staff share in the coordination and implementation of this policy.

2.0 Student Responsibility

When permission is granted to students to bring phones on trips/activities for specifically outlined uses, students must act responsibly while using their mobile phone. Students must abide by the rules and instructions outlined by management/teachers regarding the use of their mobile phone on these specific trips/activities.

2.1 Parental Role

It is the responsibility of parents and guardians to regularly monitor any mobile phone or electronic device.

2.1 Lost, Stolen or Damaged Mobile Phones or Unauthorized Electronic Devices

The school does not accept any responsibility for lost, stolen or damaged mobile phones or electronic devices on the school premises and or school activity/trip.

Signed Naola Nerney Date 5/3/24

Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed Paul Murphy Date 5/3/24

Principal/Secretary to the Board of Management