

Mobile Phone, Tablet and Electronic Devices Policy for Fermoy Adair National School

Aim:

This policy has been formulated in response to the Minister for Education and Skills' request to consult with the school communities: teachers, students and parents regarding the use of smart phones, tablets and video recording devices.

It drawn up in response to technological advances, which have seen a significant increase in hand held electronic 'gadgets' amongst the school population over recent years.

Background:

The promotion of digital technologies for teaching, learning and assessment is a priority of the Department. The Digital Strategy for Schools 2015-2020 has the following vision:

"Realise 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 to participate fully in society and the economy."

An extensive programme of actions is underway to support the implementation of the Strategy, under the Digital Strategy Action Plan. Research shows that digital technologies can play a positive role in supporting high quality teaching, learning and assessment. These technologies help promote student engagement and enhance the teaching and learning experience by opening new opportunities for learning, promoting independent learning and providing access to quality online resources.

However, their use needs careful consideration and management if they are to have a positive educational impact. The use of tablet devices and smart phones is now an integral part of the lives of children and young people. While this is a positive development, concerns have been identified including some risks associated with the misuse, abuse and possible overuse of these devices and the various associated technologies. Children and young people need to be guided and supported to become good digital citizens.

In a school setting, using digital technologies mediated by the teacher with the skills to exploit the potential of the technologies can be invaluable in equipping children with the skills to navigate the online world safely

Section 1 – Mobile Phones:

Relationship to School Ethos:

The use of mobile phones and other electronic games during school hours contravenes the provision of a safe and secure school environment and is not conducive to learning - a provision which is central to the mission statement and ethos of Fermoy Adair National School.

Mobile phones (includes Smart Phones):

1. In general the only mobile phones allowed in the school are:
 - those of the staff members, which, as much as possible, must not be used during school hours,
 - the school mobile, used for contact with parents and other external necessary calls.

The school understands that there are times when possession of a mobile can provide a sense of safety and security while travelling to and from school, as well as enabling urgent class or contact from parents/guardians.

Phone Policy for Children and Parents:

1. Children:

- Generally, children are discouraged from bringing mobile phones to school. If, **at the request of parents and after permission has been granted**, a child brings a mobile phone to school, it must be switched off and handed up to the teacher as soon as the child enters the classroom
- The teacher returns the mobile phone to the child at home time.
- If the pupil needs to contact their parent, a phone call will always be made on their behalf by the school. It has always been the school's practice to pass on important messages to the children throughout the day. Messages can be left by phoning the school on 025-33765 or 086-1621226.
- Pupils who are obliged to carry a mobile phone must switch it off on entering the school grounds in the morning
- Pupils are forbidden to switch their phone back on until they leave the school grounds after school
- Pupils who ignore this policy and are found with their phones switched on will be dealt with according to the Code of Behaviour.
- If a teacher has any suspicion that a mobile has been brought to school which may have unsuitable material stored on it, the pupil will be required to hand over the phone to the school for collection by the parents. Where there is a suspicion that the material on the mobile may have 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 replacing lost, stolen or damaged mobile phones. The safety and security of mobile phones which are not in the teacher's drawer are wholly a matter for the pupil/parents.
- Pupils should mark their phones clearly with their name
- Mobile phones which are found in the school without a name must be handed to a member of staff immediately
- It is strongly advised that pupils have passwords/pin numbers to ensure that unauthorised phone calls cannot be made from their phones. These pins and passwords must be kept confidential
- Pupils who use mobile phones to bully other pupils or to send offensive messages or to make offensive calls will face disciplinary actions as per the school's Code of Behaviour
- The same applies to pupils who take unauthorised photos or recordings of other students or staff members
- It is a criminal offence to use a mobile phone to menace, harass or offend another person. As such, if action as sanctioned by the school in this regard is ineffective, as with all incidents, the school may consider it necessary to involve the Gardaí.
- Pictures may not be taken during school hours by pupils using their phones.

2. Parents:

- Parents will be asked to turn off their phones when volunteering in the school building or playground or attending church, concerts, meetings etc so that there is no disruption to school.
- If parents wish to seek permission for their children to bring a mobile to school in emergency circumstances a letter confirming the consent will be sent from the school.
- Parental support in regard to the proper use of mobile phones is essential.
- We remind parents that mobile phones can be misused with the sending of inappropriate text messages, pictures and prank calls. This in itself is a form of bullying behaviour.

3. Staff:

Mindful of the duties and responsibilities assigned to staff in working with children, it is vital that staff be engaged with children at all working times. In this context, access to phones should be limited to urgency only.

Classroom supervision is usually organised if a class teacher has to contact other professionals or outside agencies in relation to a particular child. Staff personal calls are

normally confined to break times. Staff are permitted mobile phone usage only in cases of emergency. Breaches of this policy fall under the school's discipline policy.

Work Calls:

- Landline calls - Calls to parents/guardians should be kept as short as possible. Where a lengthy conversation with parents/guardians is required, appointments should be made to meet parents
- Classroom supervision is arranged if a class teacher has to phone parents in relation to a particular issue during the school day.
- Calls to other professionals, other outside agencies and organisations should be made in consultation with the Principal and classroom supervision will be arranged where appropriate.

Personal Calls:

- In general, personal calls and texting should be carried out during break time
- In cases of urgency, a staff member should use discretion in making calls
- Incoming personal calls and texts should be reserved for urgent matters.

Mobile Phones:

- Staff mobile phones should be switched off/on silent during class, meetings and playground duty.
- Mobile phones may be turned on during lunch time if the teacher is not on duty. Staff personal calls and texting, if necessary, should be done after school.

Section 2 – Tablets and Electronic Devices:

Rationale:

- iPods, iPads, mobile phones, smart phones, smart watches, MP3's, tablets etc. (this list is not exhaustive and is, as with technology, regularly changing) can be intrusive and distracting in a school environment,
- 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 and other electronic devices may be used to conduct bullying campaigns.

Aims:

- To ensure a "distraction free" school environment
- To lessen intrusions on and distractions to children's learning
- To lower the occurrence of online bullying taking place during school hours

In general electrical devices are only allowed in the school:

- if it is for an education purpose (Learning Support, Projects),
- if it has been approved for an out of school activity.

Internal School Procedures:

In general electrical devices are only allowed in the school:

- if it is for an education purpose (Learning Support, Projects),
- if it has been approved for an out of school activity.

The following are the guidelines for mobile phone/electronic games usage in the school;

- Pupils must not bring mobile phones or other hand-held and gaming devices to school unless an exception has been granted by the Principal or in an emergency circumstance.
- Prior permission must be sought in writing in these cases, or over the phone in an emergency situation.

In general, children are not allowed to use of mobile phones/electronic games during school hours.

However, in exceptional circumstances, such as when out of school activities are scheduled, school tours etc., children may be allowed carry a phone as parents may need to be contacted. This will be at the discretion of the teacher/Principal and at times subject to Board of Management approval.

The use electronic gadgets are, in general, discouraged, even during after school activities, unless they are needed as part of the activity and prior B.O.M. approval or approval from the Principal has been sought and granted.

Any pupil who brings a mobile phone or electronic device to school without prior permission risks having it confiscated and not returned until the school day is over, at which point their parent will have to collect it.

The school tablet devices will be used in school under the direction of the teacher as an additional platform to further the education of children in our digital world. Children are unable to export videos, photos, messages from these devices. Children may not bring their own tablet devices to school if it is deemed necessary for school activities.

Safety for Children:

Children are taught in computer class about acceptable and safe internet usage, formally and informally.

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- Use of www.webwise.ie in school.

The following policies in school govern the safety of children on the net:-

- Acceptable Usage Policy, Anti-bullying Policy which references cyberbullying and Data Protection Policy
- Permissions granted in the Annual Registration Form.

Rules:

- Mobile phones and devices, if deemed necessary for school activities or with prior permission, must be switched off and placed in the teacher's drawer on entering school and only switched on at the appropriate time for the intended use.
- The device is not to be switch on until the child has left the premises at 2:30 p.m. unless it is being used as part of an educational activity, at which time it can be switch on for the activity and then switched off and returned to the teacher's drawer.
- The camera on the phone or devise should not be used.
- All devises are brought to school at the owner's risk.
- All breaches of this policy fall under the Code of Behaviour and Discipline.

Roles and Responsibilities:

All staffs share in the co-ordination and implementation of this policy.

Evaluation:

This policy is monitored on an ongoing basis and amendments added as new technology comes on stream.

Implementation:

This policy has been in place since _____

Signed: _____ (Chairperson B.O.M. 2020)

Ratified by the Board of Management

Signed _____
Chairperson

Dated _____