

POLICY ON USE OF MOBILE PHONES (inc digital devices and smart watches)

Summary:

Policy on the use of mobile phones / other digital devices for the safety and well-being of everyone in the school community.

Policy Number: 2021/14

Revision: 3

Previous Revision: 2018/20
2015/1

Board of Governors

Submission for Ratification:
June 2021

Chairperson:



Principal:



This policy replaces any previous policies and is valid from:

1st June 2021

To be reviewed & updated by:
September 2024

By: Dr Lennon

POLICY ON USE OF MOBILE PHONES

Rationale

The widespread ownership of mobile devices among young people requires that all schools, teachers, students, parents and carers take steps to ensure that mobile devices are used responsibly at school. This Responsible Use Policy is designed to ensure that potential issues involving mobile devices can be clearly identified and addressed. This will ensure the benefits that such devices provide (such as increased safety) can continue to be enjoyed by our students whilst at the same time ensuring they do not interfere with learning.

Just like many schools Strangford College has established the following Responsible Use Policy for mobile devices to provide staff, students, parents and carers with guidelines and instructions for the appropriate use of them during school hours and when on the school site. Students, their parents or carers must read and understand the Responsible Use Policy as a condition upon which permission is given to bring mobile devices to school. The Responsible Use Policy for mobile devices also applies to students during school trips and extra-curricular activities both on the school site and off-site, unless alternative arrangements have been made.

Strangford College would like to cite that students bring mobile phones to school at their own risk. We acknowledge that parents may wish their child to have a mobile phone for use in **cases of emergency**. Mobile phones and other similar devices have many benefits, but they can be used inappropriately and may be targets for theft, used for cyber bullying, or unfiltered access to the internet.

The School operates this policy for the safety and well-being of everyone in the school community.

NB: (Throughout this policy the term *mobile phone** will be used to mean 'mobile phone/other digital device e.g. tablet, Smart Watch').

Responsible Use

- Students are permitted to bring a mobile phone* into school.
- Whilst students are on school premises, (i.e. from arrival into school until dismissal at the end of the day's lessons, or extra- curricular activities), mobile phones* **should be turned off** (not just on silent mode) and **kept out of sight**.
- Use of mobile phones* is expressly for the purposes of contact with home in the event of **unforeseen urgent need, or emergency**, and they may only be used during break, or lunchtime with the permission of the Form Teacher, or Year Head, and then only in a classroom, or suitable space, by mutual agreement.

(Unforeseen urgent necessities might include a change to a travel arrangement, or cancellation of an event).

Students must never use their mobile phones in the Canteen, or the playground.

NB: It is important to note that if a student is unwell, he/she **must** report to the Form Tutor in the first instance, and he/she will contact parents if necessary.

- At 3.30pm each day - after last class - students are permitted to switch on and use their mobile phones* when waiting for buses or waiting to be picked up from the school site.
- The making of any recordings, pictures, or images whatsoever, on school grounds is strictly prohibited. This includes recording images/sound of any person to include staff, students, or visitors, without the express permission, consent and knowledge of that person/s. Any such recording i.e. a picture taken on a mobile phone of any other person without their permission, will lead to disciplinary procedures being brought against the maker of the recording and/or owner of the phone/recording equipment.
- The Office telephone is available for students' use and should a parent need to contact their child as a matter of urgency, we request that it be done only through the College Office (Tel no: 028 91861199).

Inappropriate Conduct

- Mobile devices are banned from all examinations nationally. Students must hand the device to invigilators before entering the exam hall. Any student found in possession of a mobile device during an examination will have that paper disqualified. Such an incident may result in all other exam papers being disqualified.
- Cyber-bullying is completely unacceptable, and will be followed up by the school as serious misbehaviour in line with our Anti-Bullying policy. Using mobile devices to bully and threaten other students is totally unacceptable and will not be tolerated. In some cases it can constitute criminal behaviour. If the use of technology humiliates, embarrasses or causes offence it is unacceptable regardless of whether 'consent' was given.
- It is forbidden for students to victimise another student and use their mobile device to take videos and pictures of acts to denigrate and humiliate that student and then send the pictures to other students or upload it to a website or social media for public viewing. This also includes using mobile devices to photograph or film any student or member of staff without their consent. In the event that this happens the student will be asked and expected to delete those images immediately and given a suitable punishment. It is a criminal offence to use a mobile device to menace, harass or offend another person and calls, text messages and emails can be traced by the Police.

- Any student who uses vulgar, derogatory, or obscene language whilst using a mobile device will be given an appropriate sanction.
- Students must ensure that files stored on their mobile device do not contain violent, degrading, racist or pornographic images. The transmission of such images is a criminal offence. Similarly, 'sexting' – which is the sending of personal sexual imagery – is also a criminal offence. School will hand all such evidence to the Police.

Sanctions

- Should a student ignore, or contravene this policy and he/she is found using his/her mobile phone* inappropriately, they will be asked to turn the device off; it will then be confiscated and placed in Reception for safe keeping to be collected in person at the end of the school day. If the device is being used inappropriately the student must give it to a teacher when requested. Failure to do so will incur a punishment.
- Should this occur a second time, the student will be required to attend a C3 focus time detention.
- The right to bring mobile phones* onto school premises will be revoked if a student fails to adhere to school policy; in the event of this being disregarded, the school will act in accordance with the Behaviour for Learning Policy.

The Use of Smart Watches

- The use of **Smart Watches** is also not appropriate in **school** due to risks of loss and damage and of misuse in the same way as mobile phones or tablets. Mobile phones, devices or wearable technology such as **Smart Watches** should be switched off and kept out of sight during the school day.

Exceptions

- Individual departments may permit some students to use their mobile phones* to support Controlled Assessment work, or access Google classroom in school but permission **must** be granted by the relevant member of staff.

Responsibility for Mobile Devices

- The College accepts no responsibility whatsoever for theft, loss, damage or health effects (potential or actual) relating to mobile devices. It is the responsibility of parents/carers and students to ensure mobile devices are properly insured.

Note: All policies are annually updated with minor reviews, but most updated bi-annually for major changes unless extraordinary circumstances dictate.