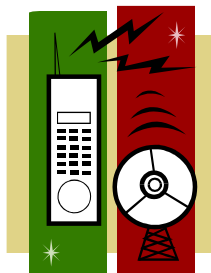


# Mobile phones & electronic games



## school policy

May 2009

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## **1. Introduction**

As a result of wonderful technological advances, there is a wide range of hand-held electronic 'gadgets' available for use by children of school-going age. These include mobile phones of various degrees of complexity and numerous musical/visual entertainment players. As the array is constantly extending, this policy applies to all electronic paraphernalia.

**It is recognised that electronic equipment can be intrusive and distracting in all situations and is particularly so in schools. Hand-held/portable entertainment equipment is not required in school, and is not permitted under any circumstances.**

However, it is accepted by the Board of Management that mobile phones may be needed in school, eg parents may need to have contact with their children after school regarding transport or after-school care arrangements, etc. On the other hand, we are aware of the fact that mobile phones may be used to conduct bullying campaigns and for other inappropriate contact.

This policy outlines the strategies used to reduce the intrusiveness of unauthorised technology in our school.

## **2. Rationale**

This policy reflects the following points

- The school cannot take responsibility for personal property, such as electronic equipment
- overuse of, and reliance on, mobile phones by children is not recommended
- monitoring of mobile phone use cannot be undertaken by school staff
- mobile phones can be used inappropriately, eg as a means of bullying
- electronic games are intrusive and distracting in a school environment
- some electronic devices may be harmful due to frequent use.

### **3. Relationship to characteristic spirit / ethos**

The use of mobile phones and other electronic games contravenes the provision of a safe and secure school environment, and is not conducive to learning - a provision which is central to the school's mission statement, which notes that

St Patrick's National School aims to provide a safe, caring, happy and disciplined environment where children's self-esteem, self-confidence, initiative and innovation can be nurtured within an atmosphere of mutual respect and appreciation.

### **4. Aims and objectives**

Through this policy, the school aims

- to ensure a 'technology-free' school environment
- to lessen intrusions on, and distractions to, children's learning

In noting that there are some circumstances in which there is a need for a child to bring a mobile phone to school, this policy aims

- to offer the best support to children and their parents, while ensuring that this is appropriate to school
- to ensure that a clear and fair application and monitoring procedure is in place
- to present clear rules and conditions for use.

### **5. Content of policy**

#### **5.1 Appropriate use**

##### Staff

All staff members have access to the school landline. Classroom supervision must be organised in the exception situation that a teacher has to contact parents, other professionals or outside agencies in relation to a particular child during class time.

**The school mobile phone is available for use by staff on school tours and excursions, or sports events away from the school.** In such circumstances, emergency telephone contact details for all participating pupils are brought by the

teacher in charge, and designated staff members take responsibility for ensuring that contact is best maintained with school and parents, as appropriate.

Staff personal calls are normally confined to break times. **If possible, calls should be taken or made in an area where pupils are not present.**

### Parents

While assisting with school activities, parent representatives may need to use a mobile phone, eg to liaise with other organisers, or as contact person with other parents. In such circumstances, it is also understood that parents may need to be contactable for personal reasons, eg child care, etc.

### Children

While aware of the potential misuse or abuse of mobile phones by children, eg bullying, or inappropriate contact, it is accepted that mobile phones may occasionally need to be brought to school by pupils, in special circumstances and under very particular conditions. Children are not allowed to use of mobile phones/electronic games during school hours. Children who need to contact home during school hours may do so through the school secretary using the school landline phone. All electronic gadgets are banned, even during after school activities. Any pupil who brings a mobile phone or electronic game to school without permission risks having it confiscated and only returned by the principal to their parent / other nominated adult.

## **5.2 Procedures**

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

### **5.2.1 Parental request**

(ref *Appendix 1, Form - permission request*)

Parents who wish their child to bring a mobile phone to school must apply to the principal in writing, stating reasons why the phone is needed at school. A

standardised application form is available through the school office. Applications administered by the principal, and all related correspondence is kept on file.

The conditions under which children may have a mobile phone in school, as stated on the form are:

1. Parents/guardians who wish their child to carry a mobile phone must inform the principal of this in writing, giving reasons why the phone is needed.
2. No child will be allowed to bring a camera phone to school.
3. A child who has a phone must keep it switched off and in his/her schoolbag at all times during the school day.
4. The school takes no responsibility for the loss/breakage/theft of any mobile phone.

Parents also sign that they understand that any breach of these conditions will result in the confiscation of the mobile phone, that confiscated phones will be returned only to the parents of the child in question, and that should the child breach the conditions more than once, he/she will lose the privilege of being allowed to bring a mobile phone to school.

### **5.2.2 Pupils**

Children who need to contact home during school hours may do so through the school secretary using the school landline phone.

In exceptional circumstances, such as when out of school activities and after-school activities are scheduled, children may be allowed carry a phone under specific conditions, as parents may need to be contacted. Pupils who have permission to have a mobile phone in their possession at school are aware that the phone must be switched off at all times while on the school grounds. It must remain switched off in his/her schoolbag at all times during the school day, and may only be switched on after leaving the school premises. All pupils and their parents are aware of the conditions under which mobile phones are allowed.

No electronic gadgets are permitted in school, even during after-school activities.

### **5.3 Health and safety**

The school takes no responsibility for the loss, breakage, or theft of any electronic equipment.

## **6. Roles and responsibilities**

It is the responsibility of each parent, through their child, to ensure that the rules laid down are followed as a condition of having permission to have a mobile phone in school. Any breach of these rules will result in the confiscation of the mobile phone.

Confiscated phones will be returned only to the parents of the child in question. Should a child breach the conditions more than once, he/she will lose the privilege of being allowed to bring a mobile phone to school.

## **7. Success criteria**

It is hoped that this policy will ensure the provision of a safe school environment, conducive to learning, while also accommodating those individual circumstances that require children to be contactable by parents immediately before or after school hours.

## **8. Ratification and communication**

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 18 May 2009.

The school's policy is available on the school web site and through the school office. A standardised letter of application for mobile phone use at school is available from the school secretary.

## **9. Review**

This policy will be reviewed in 2013. However, the Board of Management reserves the right to change this policy at any time should the need to do so arise.

## APPENDIX 1

### PARENTAL PERMISSION FORM

**St Patrick's National School**, Greystones, Co Wicklow

## **MOBILE PHONE**

Pupil's name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

I wish to apply for permission for my child to have a mobile phone in school. I have read the school's policy as adopted by Board of Management in 2009, and I agree to the conditions therein, ie

1. Parents/guardians who wish their child to carry a mobile phone must inform the principal of this in writing, giving reasons why the phone is needed.
2. No child will be allowed to bring a camera phone to school.
3. A child who has a phone must keep it switched off and in his/her schoolbag at all times during the school day.
4. The school takes no responsibility for the loss/breakage/theft of any mobile phone.

I understand that any breach of these conditions will result in the confiscation of the mobile phone, that confiscated phones will be returned only to the parents of the child in question, and that should my child breach the conditions more than once, he/she will lose the privilege of being allowed to bring a mobile phone to school.

Reasons why mobile phone is needed in school:

Signature(s): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Parent(s)/guardian(s)

Date: