

St. Joseph's N.S, Leitrim Village, Roll No: 01125B

Smart Phones, Tablets and Electronic Devices Policy

1. Introductory Statement

BOM and staff considered it necessary to review the existing Mobile Phone and Electronic Devices Policy following the publication of Circular 38/ 2018 'Consultation with the school community including teachers, students and parents on the use of smart phones and tablet devices in schools'. A questionnaire was issued to all parents, teachers and pupils in 3rd to 6th class in June 2018. Feedback from these questionnaires is incorporated into this review. In recent years there have been many technological advances, which have seen a significant increase in mobile phone/ smart phone and an in hand held electronic 'gadgets' (I-pods, I- pads, tablets, electronic games/ computer games etc) ownership amongst the school population. An increasing number of pupils have also been granted Assistive Technology in order access the curriculum.

2. Rationale

- I-pods, I-pads, tablets, mobile phones/ Smart phones, Game Boys, PSP's, MP3's etc. 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/ Smart phones may be used to conduct bullying campaigns
- There has been an increase in the number of pupils granted assistive technology from the Department of Education and Skills
- Publication of the DES Digital Strategy which aims to imbed ICT in the curriculum
- The above devices are expensive and the BOM **will not** take responsibility for lost or stolen personal devices or damages to these personal devices while on school ground or on school outings.

3. Relationship to School Ethos

The use of mobile phones/ smart phones and other electronic devices/ gadgets/ games 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 St. Joseph's N.S. Keeping this in mind the school also wants to develop pupil's digital literacy skills and acknowledges that assistive technology is necessary for some pupils to access the curriculum.

4. Aims

- To ensure a safe and secure school environment for all pupils and staff
- To lessen intrusions on and distractions to children's learning

5. Internal School Procedures:

The following are the guidelines for mobile phone/smart phone, electronic devices, tablets and games usage in the school:

- Pupils are **not** allowed to bring personal mobile phones/ smart phones, personal tablets or electronic games onto school grounds. (See feedback for questionnaires contained in appendix A).
- There will be **one exception only** to this rule regarding mobile phones/ smart phones. In the event of pupils participating in school activities, outside of school hours, such as school

tour/ scheduled sports events, children *may* be allowed carry a mobile phone to contact parents to arrange collection. Phones *must* be turned off until instructed by the teacher to contact home. *This permission is not a given. The principal must be consulted first and give permission in advance of the event.*

- Under **no** circumstances are children allowed to use a personal mobile phones/ smart phones, personal tablets or electronic games/ devices during school hours.
- Pupils who need to contact home during school hours may do so through the school secretary using the school landline phone.
- Likewise parents who need to contact children during the school day are asked to phone the school secretary on the school landline. The secretary will then relay the message to the child.
- Any pupil who brings a mobile phone/ smart phone, tablet or electronic game/ device to school risks having it confiscated. The class teacher will pass the device onto the principal and the child's parents will be asked to call into the school to collect the device. Therefore, it may not be possible to return the device at the end of that school day.
- The BOM does not accept any responsibility for lost, stolen or damaged devices while on school grounds.
- Staff have access to the school landline if urgent calls need to be made to parents.
- Classroom supervision is organised, in line with our school supervision policy, if a class teacher has to contact other professionals or outside agencies in relation to a particular child during school hours.
- Staff personal calls are normally confined to break times.
- Staff are permitted mobile phone/ smart phone usage only in cases of emergency.
- Teachers may bring personal electronic devices such as tablets/ i-pads etc to school to use with pupils in a supervised setting. Following teacher's instruction, the pupil(s) would use educational apps, take photographs, make recordings etc under that teacher's supervision. The BOM does not accept responsibility for loss or damages to any such device.
- Pupils with Special Educational Needs may need assistive technology to access the curriculum but may not qualify for DES funding for such technology. In this event, if the pupil has assistive technology at home, and if the pupil's parents are willing, that pupil may use personal assistive technology in school under the strict supervision of the class teacher, SEN teacher or SNA. This would be pre-arranged with the pupil's parents and the BOM informed. The BOM again does not accept responsibility for loss or damages to any such technology and parents must sign an indemnity form to this effect.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

The BOM, staff, parents and pupils share in the co-ordination and implementation of this policy.

7. Evaluation and Review

This policy is monitored on an ongoing basis and amendments added as new technology comes on stream. This policy will be reviewed every two years, or sooner should the need arise.

8. Implementation

A policy on Mobile phones has been in place for a number of years (Pre-2006). This policy replaces all previous policies on the matter. Once ratified this policy will have immediate effect.

9. Communication

Once ratified the policy will be communicated to parent via the communication letter. It will be uploaded to the school website and included in the school Information Booklet given to all families on enrolment of a pupil in the school.

10. Ratification

This revised policy was ratified by the BOM on 27th September 2018 and has immediate effect.

11. References

DES Circular 38/2018: ‘Consultation with the school community including teachers, students and parents on the use of smart phones and tablet devices in schools’

DES ‘Digital Strategy for Schools 2015 – 2020: Enhancing Teaching, Learning and Assessment’

Both of these documents can be found on the DES website, www.education.ie

Signed: _____

Chairperson of BOM

Signed: _____

Principal

Date: _____

Appendix A
Summary of Feedback from Questionnaires on the use of Smartphones and tablets in school
June 2018

Parental Questionnaires

138 issued, 55 returned, 40% returned. Of those returned 54, 98%, did not want pupils to use their own personal smartphone or tablet in school.

One person was in favour of children bringing smartphone to school but to be used after school when walking home as a safety measure.

One parent commented that smartphones and tablets are allowed secondary school and pupils conservation skills have diminished. There are issues when the devices have to be confiscated.

Parents thought smartphones and tablets were unnecessary for primary school pupils and some thought that children shouldn't own them never mind bringing them to school.

Another parent though ICT skills and typing are useful but should be taught in a controlled way.

Pupil Questionnaire

A pupil questionnaire was issued to pupils in 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th class. Only 4th class and 6th class pupil questionnaires were returned.

4th class

23 out of 27 completed the questionnaire, 85% return rate. 60% of these pupils own a smartphone and 65% own a tablet. 65% were in favour of bringing and using personal smartphones and tablets to school, most opting for use during specified times under the direct supervision of a teacher.

6th class

13 out of 27 pupils completed the questionnaire, 48% return rate. 100% of these pupils owned a smartphone and 70% owned a tablet. 77% were in favour of bringing and using personal devices to school.

Teacher Questionnaire

8 teachers completed and returned the questionnaire, 66% return rate. 100% of teachers were in favour of pupils not bringing personal smartphones or tablets to school. Reasons for this included the difficulty around teaching using different devices and the difficulty with supervising what children were viewing on line. The area of cyberbullying was also a cause for concern