

Coláiste na Mí



Mobile Phone Policy

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1. INTRODUCTION:

Coláiste na Mí recognises that it is commonplace for students to have a mobile phone/electronic device and we acknowledge the positive aspects of this. Nonetheless, this cannot compromise or disrupt teaching and learning. There are potential dangers for the school community (pupils, parents, visitors, staff, coaches, teaching staff, management, trustees) stemming from the misuse and abuse of electronic media. The following policy aims to maintain a safe, nurturing environment where the personal dignity and rights of all the members of the school community are preserved. This policy should be read with reference to the Code of Behaviour and the Anti-Bullying Policy. In order to assist the school in implementing this policy, parents/guardians are asked not to arrange to contact students by mobile phone at any time during the school day. Contact with the school may be made through the office at 046 9012130 and students are directed to use the office phone in emergencies.

2. RATIONALE

The widespread ownership of mobile phones and other communication/recording devices among young people requires that school management, teachers, students, and parents take steps to ensure that they are used responsibly at schools. School management is proposing a policy which prohibits the use of mobile phones by students while on school property; and unauthorised use of mobile phones while on off-site school activities. It is not realistic to have a policy which prohibits students from taking mobile phones to school. Not only would it be impractical to forbid students' from carrying them, but it is also believed that a number of parents would be concerned for health and safety reasons - if their child were not allowed to carry a phone at all and might therefore be unable to contact their parents in respect of any situation which may arise before and after school times.

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:

This policy aims to ensure the safe and appropriate use of mobile communication devices and prevent disruption of school life and reduce the incidents of abuse of others.

In a survey of CNM teachers in 2018, 75% of respondents reported that mobile phone use by a student during class time had negatively affected their class.

This policy will:

- Ensure no student, member of staff or person associated with the school need suffer unwanted caricature by others.
- Reduce disruption of class due to phones/cameras etc.
- Reduce distraction of students in class due to phones/cameras etc.
- Ensure students will not use cameras in school to record or photograph staff or other students.
- Ensure that maximum use is made of the managed and controlled iPads each students have for independent research and accessing the VLE (Virtual Learning Environments)
- Ensure that students do not use phones to communicate with other students during school time for the purpose of organising anti-social activities.

- Minimise time spent by staff and management in dealing with breaches of the code of conduct policy.
- Ensure that cyber-bullying does not take place through the use of mobile communication devices and subsequent uploading of images/comments to social media.
- Reduce the occurrences of abusive, hurtful or inappropriate communication through the use of mobile communication devices.
- Eliminate the tendency for students to compete with the latest technology.

4. USE OF MOBILE PHONES

- All mobile phones/electronic devices are to be switched off and out of sight during school hours and when on the school campus (school grounds and buildings). This includes the period of time each student is in the school building before commencement of the first class, during the small break, during lunch and until the last class of the day. **It is not sufficient to set the devices on silent mode.**
- While off the school campus, but on school activities (e.g. games, field trips and school tours), mobile phones /electronic devices must be switched off. However, if it is necessary for the student to contact a parent/guardian, then permission to turn on a mobile phone/electronic device must be sought from the supervising teacher. The phone must be turned off again at the conclusion of the conversation.
- Students must not use mobile phones to ring, text or otherwise communicate with parents/guardians during the course of the school day. All contact with home must be carried out through the school office. This includes a student contacting a parent/guardian wanting to go home if feeling unwell.
- Students attending after-school study, detention or other after-school activities may use their phones to call/text parents if necessary between the end of school and the start of the activity. They may not use their phone during the after-school activity.
- Students may not use their mobile phone device to photograph or record by either video or audio while on the school premises without the school's permission. Using a phone in such a way can seriously infringe on people's privacy and rights.
- Students using mobile phones to bully other students will face disciplinary actions as sanctioned by the School's Code of Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policy. The misuse of a mobile phone including a camera phone in taking or sending inappropriate images, unauthorised recording of staff and students, transfer of images of staff or pupils or using the phone to harass will be considered a serious discipline offence. It should be noted that it is a criminal offence to use a mobile phone to menace, harass or offend another person.

5. SANCTIONS

- a) If a student is seen using a phone without permission in school, or the mobile phone is seen on their person, for any reason, the student will be required to power off their phone and hand it, including the sim card, to a member of staff. The phone will be confiscated until the end of the following school day. If this occurs on a Friday, then the phone shall be returned to the student after school on the following Monday. The parent/guardian will be contacted by phone to inform them of this prior to the student leaving school. If the parent does not answer, a voicemail will be left and a follow up text message will go out informing parents the student's phone has been confiscated.
- b) Any refusal or defiance shown by the student towards a teacher who is enforcing the mobile phone policy will be considered to have committed a serious breach of the school's Code of Behaviour and will result in an automatic one-day suspension.
- c) Confiscated phones will be turned off by the student and placed in a sealed envelope, signed and dated by the teacher confiscating the device. The envelope will then be given to the appropriate year head. The year head will ensure that the phone is left in the main office. The phone will only be returned to student from the main office after the time and date specified by the year head (the end of the following school day).
- d) Repeated incidents of unauthorised mobile phone use may result in longer periods of confiscation to be determined by the year head and may need to be collected by a parent/guardian by appointment at the end of the school day or at a later time by agreement.
- e) The use of a mobile phone or communication/recording device to take unauthorised photographs, video or audio recordings within school or while on a school related trip/activity may result in immediate suspension from school. It may also result in the confiscation of the device for a period of time to be decided by the year head, Principal and/or Board of Management.
- f) Any student/s caught using a mobile phone or communication/recording device to cheat in exams or assessments will face disciplinary action and their exam terminated. Students doing so in state exams will face serious consequences as specified by the State Examinations Commission.
- g) The Board of Management reserves the right to allow the Principal or other teacher to ask a pupil to show them the contents of their mobile phone or communication/recording device if they are caught using it in the school.
- h) In the case of repeated infringements of this policy or for more serious infractions of this policy the mobile phone or communication/recording device may be confiscated for a longer period as deemed appropriate by the Principal and/or Board of Management.

- i) The use of a mobile phone for HotSpotting purposes for iPads is forbidden. All iPads should be connected to the school WiFi only.

6. RESPONSIBILITY FOR MOBILE PHONES

- a) The safety and security of mobile phone is wholly the responsibility of students/parents.
- b) Students who bring a mobile phone or similar device to school should leave it in their bag when they arrive. To reduce the risk of theft during school hours, students who carry mobile phones or similar devices are advised to keep them well concealed.
- c) Mobile phones or similar devices that are found in the school and whose owner cannot be located should be handed to the school office.
- d) The school accepts no responsibility for replacing lost, stolen or damaged mobile phones or similar devices.
- e) The School accepts no responsibility for students who lose or have their phone stolen while travelling to or from school.
- f) The School accepts no responsibility for incidents that occur as a result of the mobile phone being confiscated.

7. THE ROLE OF PARENTS/GUARDIANS IN SUPPORTING STUDENTS

During school time parents/guardians should communicate with their child through the school office only. Parents/guardians are encouraged to remind their child that mobile phones must be powered off on the school premises/grounds during school time. Parents/guardians are encouraged to discuss with their child the dangers of inappropriate mobile phone use and are encouraged to monitor their child's use of a mobile phone.

8. DATE AND RATIFICATION BY THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 20th May 2021.

This policy will be implemented from August 2021.

Date of the next review: May 2022