



Monkstown Educate Together
National School

Pupil Mobile Phone Policy

Monkstown Educate Together N.S.

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Introduction and Rationale

The possession and use of mobile phones by school students is now extensive, even in the primary school sector. Use of mobile phones (particularly with the advent of increasingly sophisticated equipment and camera phones) presents a number of problems, including vulnerability to theft, being a distraction to learning and causing general discipline problems. Of even greater concern, mobile phones and other electronic devices can be used as a method of bullying or to menace, harass or offend another person directly or indirectly via social media. There are also serious privacy concerns relating to the ability of many phones to take photographs, make audio or video recordings unbeknownst to the children or adults being photographed or recorded and the possible dissemination of such recordings. The issue of mobile phones in METNS is dealt with by this policy.

Relationship to Our School Ethos

The provision of a safe and secure school environment, ensuring that the dignity of both children and adults is respected and the creation an atmosphere conducive to learning are all central to the mission of METNS. The use and particularly misuse of mobile phones is not compatible with these goals or the general school ethos

Statement of Policy

In this policy the Board of Management prohibits the possession of and use of mobile phones by students while on the school premises or involved in school activities such as tours/ trips or extra-curricular activities. The possession of or use of other equivalent electronic devices (any device that can take photographs, connect to phone networks, Wi-Fi or any internet network) is also forbidden. This policy acknowledges that there are exceptional circumstances in which a child will need access to their mobile phone off school grounds and therefore need their phone in their possession. This policy allows for these cases. Permission to carry a phone will only be granted in these exceptional circumstances and will require the express written request of parents or guardians. The Board particularly asks parents and guardians to only make such a request if it is absolutely necessary for the child's safety during the journey to and from school.

School Procedures

1. It is not permitted for pupils at METNS to bring a mobile phone or any electronic device to school or to any school related event unless they are previously registered as being allowed to carry a phone for the journey to and from school.
2. Such permission must be requested in writing by the parents or guardians of the child, such permission to be sought annually.
3. Where permission is granted a permission slip/possession of phone contract must be signed by both the parent/guardian and the child and returned to the school and must include the phone number of the phone being carried and contact details for the parent/guardian. A register of pupils with permission will be kept by teachers/coaches and in the school office.
4. All phones carried by pupils must be turned off outside the gates of the school and are not allowed to be turned back on until the child is outside the school premises when leaving. There are no exceptions to this rule other than the express permission of a teacher or coach which will only be given in exceptional circumstances and must be received before the phone is turned on.
5. All phones must be handed to the teacher or coach at the beginning of the day or of the activity and will be returned before the child leaves. Any student found with a phone in their possession during the school day will be judged to be in contravention of this policy whether the phone is turned off or not.
6. All phones being brought to school and handed up must be clearly labelled with the child's name and class.
7. The school accepts no responsibility for pupils who lose or have their mobile phones stolen on the way to or from school or for replacing lost, stolen or damaged mobile phones while in the care of the school.
8. Please note that if parents or guardians need to be contacted during the school day this will be done via the school office at the request of the class teacher or coach. If necessary the child will be permitted to speak with the parent/guardian on the office phone. All phone contacts for parents and guardians should be kept up to date.
9. The safety and security of mobile phones is wholly a matter for pupils and parents. It is strongly advised that pupils use password/PIN code to ensure that unauthorized phone calls cannot be made on their phones. Passwords/PIN codes should be kept confidential and phones or passwords/PIN codes should not be shared.

Sanctions

Pupils will be viewed as being in breach of this policy in the following instances:

- pupils who have a mobile phone in their possession without permission
- students who have permission to carry a mobile phone but do not hand it up to the teacher or coach, whether or not the phone is turned on
- any pupil who has a phone turned on or in use in any way anywhere on the school premises, or any school-related activity (including but not limited to school fairs, trips and sporting events)

In all such cases the phone in question will be confiscated immediately. Parents will be notified by phone or in writing. Confiscated phones must be signed for and collected by a parent/guardian at the school office. In addition the school will treat any such breach of this policy as they would treat other breaches of school discipline in accordance with both Positive Behaviour Policy and the Anti-Bullying Policy.

Inappropriate conduct and further sanctions

Any pupil using mobile phones or similar devices to bully, harass or take pictures of other children, staff member or any visitor to the school will be deemed to have committed a serious offence and be subject to appropriate disciplinary action as outlined in The Positive Behaviour Policy. If it is clear that this has taken place the parents/guardians and the offending child will be requested to come to school to discuss the matter. The phone will not be returned until all such material has been witnessed to be removed and parents and child have undertaken that it be removed from anywhere else it may have been shared. Permission for that child to hold a mobile phone, if they have such a permission, will be automatically rescinded and not reconsidered until the following academic year at the earliest.

It should be noted that it is a criminal offence to use a mobile phone to menace, harass or offend another person. As such, if actions sanctioned by the Principal are deemed ineffective or the abuse is sufficiently serious in nature, or where material on the mobile phone may provide evidence relating to a criminal offence the school may consider it appropriate or necessary to involve the Gardaí and hand the phone over to them as requested. Parents will be informed in such circumstances. Hence student with mobile phones must not engage in personal attacks, harass another person or post private information about another person via SMS messages/ chat rooms/social network sites. Nor may they take/send/upload photographs or circulate objectionable or inappropriate images.

Responsibility

It is the responsibility of all Parents/Guardians, Staff and Pupils to adhere to this policy. This policy is subject to regular review.

Review

This policy will be reviewed regularly according to the ongoing schedule of review of school policies.

Ratification and Communication

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management in September 2015.