

OMAGH HIGH SCHOOL



MOBILE PHONE POLICY

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OMAGH HIGH SCHOOL - MOBILE PHONE POLICY

1. CONTEXT

“Every school should have a clear policy on the use of Mobile Phones on its premises, and make it clear that any abuse - such as using these phones to bully and humiliate - will be dealt with severely.”
Minister for Education and Young People, Feb '07.

Omagh High School recognises that students regularly use electronic devices and that many parents wish their children to carry mobile phones to enhance their safety before and after school and on journeys to and from school. It is also understood that mobile phones, including smart phones and watches, are an important part of everyday life for our children, parents and staff, as well as the wider school community. Therefore, Omagh High School aims to develop a culture of responsible use of mobile phones and other digital devices by everyone within the school community.

Omagh High School further recognises that there are many benefits and learning opportunities to be gained from the use of technology such as mobile phones and other digital devices. However, the increasing technical sophistication of these devices raises issues and challenges which the school management must address.

Online safety, in all cases in schools and elsewhere, remains a paramount concern. It is essential not only that pupils and adults are kept safe online whilst in school and on school-organised activities, but that schools are energetic in teaching pupils how to act responsibly and keep themselves safe in the digital world.

Our policy aims to:

- Promote safe and responsible phone use
- Set clear guidelines for the use of mobile phones for children, staff, parents, visitors and volunteers
- Support the school's other policies, Safeguarding, Behaviour and Anti bullying

This policy also aims to address some of the challenges posed by mobile phones in school, such as:

- Risks to child protection
- Data protection issues
- Potential for lesson disruption
- Risk of theft, loss or damage

2. RATIONALE

2.1 Aside from the safeguarding issue, the rationale for this policy is that it has been shown that the effect of banning mobile phones from school premises adds up to the equivalent of an extra week's schooling over a child's academic year. This is according to research by Louis-Philippe Beland and Richard Murphy, published by the Centre for Economic Performance at the London School of Economics.

“Ill Communication: The Impact of Mobile Phones on Student Performance” found that after schools banned mobile phones, the test scores of students aged 16 improved by 6.4%. The economists cite

that this is the “equivalent of adding five days to the school year”. According to Beland and Murphy, a phone ban produced improvements in test scores among students, with the lowest-achieving students gaining twice as much as average students. The ban had a greater positive impact on students with special education needs and those eligible for free school meals, while having no discernible effect on high achievers. “We found that not only did student achievement improve, but also that low-achieving and low income students gained the most. We found the impact of banning phones for these students was equivalent to an additional hour a week in school, or to increasing the school year by five days.”

In addition to the academic benefits of banning mobile phones and other digital devices, other issues are attributed to the misuse of such devices.

- 2.2 Research has shown that mobile telephones may impact on the health of young people;ⁱ
- 2.3 Mobile telephones represent a serious nuisance and form of disruption when they are left switched on in teaching areas or any other public forum within the school grounds;
- 2.4 Examination Boards have highlighted the security issues regarding mobile telephones, digital devices and public examinations;ⁱⁱ
- 2.5 Research has shown that some students experience bullying through the use of text and picture messaging via mobile telephones;ⁱⁱⁱ
- 2.6 Picture messaging is being used to send pornographic images via mobile telephones,
- 2.7 Picture telephones with built-in or attached digital cameras are being used to take pictures and videos without the subject knowing and many of these are appearing on websites. Such pictures can be digitally stored and manipulated as required,
- 2.8 Social media sites may leave users vulnerable to exploitation if used inappropriately.

3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 All staff (including teachers, support staff, and supply staff) are responsible for enforcing this policy. Volunteers, or anyone else otherwise engaged by the school, must alert a member of staff if they witness, or are aware of, a breach of this policy.

3.2 The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) are responsible for monitoring the policy every 2 years, reviewing it, and holding staff and children accountable for its implementation.

4. LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

- 4.1 There are a number of aspects of the law that may apply to the misuse of mobile phones and other digital devices, and the response to that misuse. This will depend on the circumstances of individual cases.

Certain types of conduct, bullying or harassment can be classified as criminal conduct. The school takes such conduct extremely seriously and will involve the police or other agencies as appropriate.

Such conduct includes, but is not limited to:

Threats of violence or assault

Abusive calls, emails, social media posts

Sexting

Texts directed at someone on the basis of someone's ethnicity, religious beliefs or sexual orientation.

- 4.2 Offences may fall under Data Protection Act 2018.

5. STUDENTS' USE OF MOBILE PHONES AND DIGITAL DEVICES

- 5.1 Students are advised that mobile telephones should not be brought to school and that the school is not liable for theft, loss or damage of telephones or other similar property belonging to students. **If it is felt necessary to bring a mobile phone to school it must be placed in a school locker as soon as the pupil arrives in school and left there until the pupil leaves school. Mobile phones are not to be used at any point during the school day or on the school premises.**

- 5.2 Parents should be aware if their child takes a mobile phone to school.

- 5.3 Pupils are not permitted to use a mobile device, smart watch or electronic device including headphones anywhere in school or during formal school events taking place at other locations except under the specific direction of a member of staff. For the purposes of this policy, the school day begins the moment the children enter the school grounds and ends once the children leave the grounds. Mobile phones must not be used at any after school extra-curricular clubs except under the specific direction of a member of staff.

- 5.4 Students are responsible for ensuring that their mobile telephones are switched off.

- 5.5 Students are prohibited from using any mobile telephone for the purpose of taking, storing or sending still digital images and / or video clips. This includes any mobile telephone or similar device which may store digital images or text messages.

- 5.6 Students and parents are reminded that in cases of an emergency, the school office remains the appropriate point of contact. Pupils are permitted to use the telephone in the school office in cases of emergency (e.g. missed bus, lift home fails to arrive etc.)

- 5.7 The recording, storing and / or transmission of digital images within the school grounds is strictly prohibited.
- 5.8 Students must not bring mobile telephones, smart watches or electronic devices into any formal or public examination, switching off a telephone will not be sufficient on such occasions. Such an infringement of this regulation could mean disqualification from the current examination.
- 5.9 Students engaged on out of school visits must abide by the regulations set out for the visit and uphold at all times details set out by the teacher in charge. Phones must not be used to record images while in the care of the school.
- 5.10 Failure to observe the above rules will result in the immediate confiscation of the mobile telephone by the teacher observing or detecting the breach of this rule. The pupil will automatically be placed in an after school detention.
- 5.11 When a student has his/her mobile phone or digital device confiscated the teacher will bring the mobile phone to the main office where a member of the administrative staff will log the date and time of confiscation along with the name and class of the student.
- 5.12 The phone will be securely stored in the main office.
- 5.13 If a phone or digital device has been confiscated, then the confiscated phone or device may only be collected from the main office by a parent during office hours. Office hours are detailed in the Home Study Diary.
- 5.14 Parents/Guardians and pupils will be required to sign the Acceptable Use of Mobile Phone Agreement for Pupils (Appendix 1) if they wish to bring a mobile phone or similar digital device to school. The mobile device will be stored in their locker immediately upon entering the school building.

6. SANCTIONS

- 6.1 Persistent breaking of this rule will be regarded as a breach of discipline and will invoke the School's Disciplinary Procedures.

7. USE OF MOBILE PHONES AND DIGITAL DEVICES BY STAFF

7.1 Personal mobile phones

Staff (including volunteers, contractors and anyone else otherwise involved/employed by the school) should not make or receive calls or send texts, while children are present. Use of personal mobile phones should be restricted to non-contact time and to areas of the school where children are not present such as the staffroom.

There may be circumstances in which it is appropriate for a member of staff to have use of their phone during contact time, for example, in the case of acutely ill dependents. This should be the exception and not common practice. In such cases, please inform the principal that this is necessary.

7.2 Safeguarding

Staff must refrain from giving their personal contact details to parents or children, including connecting through social media and messaging apps.

Staff must avoid publicising their contact details on any social media platform or website, to avoid unwanted contact by parents or children.

Staff must not use their mobile phones to take photographs or recordings of children, their work, or anything else which could identify a pupil. If it is necessary to take photos or recordings as part of a lesson/school trip/activity, this must be done using school equipment.

7.3 Using personal mobiles for work purposes

In some circumstances, it may be appropriate for staff to use personal mobile phones for work. Such circumstances may include, but are not limited to:

- Emergency evacuations
- Supervising off-site trips
- Supervising residential visits

In these circumstances, staff will:

- Use their mobile phones in an appropriate and professional manner, in line with our Staff Code of Conduct
- Not use their phones to take photographs or recordings of children, their work, or anything else which could identify a pupil.

7.4 Work phone

Members of staff should use the school mobile phone for work purposes such as school trips. Access to the phone must not be provided to anyone without authorisation. Staff must ensure that communication or conduct linked to the device is appropriate and professional at all times, in line with our Staff Code of Conduct.

7.5 Sanctions

Staff that fail to adhere to this policy may face disciplinary action. See the school's staff disciplinary policy for more information.

8. USE OF MOBILE PHONES AND DIGITAL DEVICES BY PARENTS, VISITORS AND VOLUNTEERS

Parents, visitors and volunteers (including governors and contractors) must adhere to this policy as it relates to staff if they are on the school site during the school day.

This means:

- Not taking pictures or recordings of children, unless it is a public event, or of their own child;
- Using any photographs or recordings for personal use only, and not posting on social media without consent;
- Not using phones in lessons, or when working with children.

Parents, visitors and volunteers will be informed of the rules for mobile phone use when they sign in at reception or attend a public event at school. (Appendix 2)

Parents or volunteers supervising trips are also responsible for enforcing the school's policy for children using their phones, as set out in section 5 of this policy.

Parents must use either Reception as the first point of contact if they need to get in touch with their child during the school day. They must not try to contact their child on his/her personal mobile during the school day.

9. LOSS, THEFT OR DAMAGE

- Children bringing phones to school must ensure that phones are stored securely in their lockers.
- Children must secure their phones as much as possible, including using passwords or pin codes to protect access to the phone's functions.
- Staff must also secure their personal phones, as well as any work phone provided to them. Failure by staff to do so could result in GDPR breaches.
- Where a mobile phone is brought into school, it is entirely at the child's and parents' own risk.
- The school accepts no responsibility for the loss, theft or damage of any phone or electronic device brought into school.
- Confiscated phones will be stored in a secure location and must be signed out by the child's parent/legal guardian upon return.

10. MONITORING AND REVIEW

The school is committed to ensuring that this policy has a positive impact on children's education, behaviour and welfare. When reviewing the policy, the school will take into account relevant advice from the Department for Education, the local authority or other relevant organisations.

This policy will be reviewed every two years.

11. OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Childnet International

Childnet International is a children's charity committed to helping to make the Internet a safe place for children. Information for parents to help keep their children safe online may be found on their website: <http://www.childnet-int.org/>.

ICSTIS

ICSTIS, the Independent Committee for the Supervision of Standards of Telephone Information Services, is the industry-funded regulatory body for all premium rate charged telephone services. <http://www.icstis.org.uk/>

Footnotes:

ⁱ World Health Organisation – www.who.int;
National Radiological Protection Board – www.nrp.org.uk

ⁱⁱ CCEA – www.ccea.org.uk

ⁱⁱⁱ EA Policy on Bullying www.eani.org.uk

Bullying Online - www.bullying.co.uk/children/mobile_phone.htm;

Department of Education - <http://safety.ngfl.gov.uk/schools/document.php3?D=d70>

Appendix 1: Acceptable Use of Mobile Phone Agreement for Pupils

1. Pupils are not permitted to use a mobile phone, smart watch or electronic device including headphones anywhere in school or during formal school events taking place at other locations except under the specific direction of a member of staff. For the purposes of this policy, the school day begins the moment pupils enter the school grounds and ends once pupils leave the grounds. Mobile phones must not be used at any after school extra-curricular clubs except under the specific direction of a member of staff.
2. Phones must be switched off and stored in pupils' lockers as soon as they come into the school building.
3. For safeguarding reasons, pupils must not use their mobile phone in the toilets or changing rooms. This is to protect the privacy and welfare of other children.
4. Pupils must not take photos or recordings (either video or audio) of school staff or other children.
5. Pupils must avoid sharing their contact details with people they don't know, and don't share other people's contact details without their consent.
6. Pupils should not share their phone's passwords or access codes with anyone else.
7. Pupils should not use their mobile phone to bully, intimidate or harass anyone. This includes bullying, harassing or intimidating children or staff email, text/messaging app or social media.
8. Pupils must not use their phone to send or receive anything that may be criminal. For instance, by 'sexting'.
9. Rules on bullying, harassment, and intimidation apply to how pupils use their mobile phone even when they aren't in school. Such actions may invoke referral to PSNI.
10. Pupils should not use vulgar, obscene or derogatory language while on the phone or when using social media.
11. Pupils must comply with a request by a member of staff to conduct a mobile phone check of lockers, blazers and other belongings e.g. sports bags or to hand over a phone. Refusal to comply is a breach of the school's Behaviour Policy and will be dealt with accordingly.
12. Mobile phones or similar digital devices are not permitted in any examination or test environment. If pupils have such devices in their possession during an examination, it will result in their exam being declared invalid.

I agree that my child, _____, will abide by Omagh High School's Mobile Phone Policy. I understand that the policy is to safeguard all members of the school community.

Parent/Guardian: _____

Pupil Signature: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 2: Mobile Phone Information Slip for Parents, Visitors and Volunteers

Use of mobile phones and digital devices in our school

- Please keep your mobile phone on silent/vibrate while on the school grounds.
- Please do not use phones where children are present.
- Do not take photos or recordings of children, other visitors or staff.
- Do not use your phone in lessons or when working with children.
- The school accepts no responsibility for phones that are lost, damaged or stolen while you are on the school grounds.
- A full copy of our Mobile Phone Policy is available on the school website.