

## ***Updated Mobile Phone / Electronic Devices Policy 2017***

### **Introductory Statement**

This policy was reviewed by the Board of Management and school staff in response to technological advances which have seen a significant increase in hand held electronic devices amongst the school population over recent years and the concerns over the possible inappropriate use of such devices.

### **Rationale**

- Mobile phones are valuable items and might render a pupil vulnerable to theft of damage.
- Mobile phones could have implications with regard to discipline and potential bullying.
- Use of phones with integrated cameras could lead to child protection and/or data protection issues with regard to inappropriate capture, use or distribution of images.
- iPods, mobile phones, Game Boys, PSP's, MP3's etc. are intrusive and distracting in a school environment.
- Some electronic devices may be harmful due to frequent use.
- Strategies must be put in place to reduce the intrusiveness of unauthorised technology in a school situation.

### **Relationship to School Ethos**

The use of mobile phones and other electronic games contravenes the provision of a safe and secure school environment conducive to learning, a provision which is central to the mission statement and ethos of St Anthony's School.

### **Aim**

The Board of Management accepts that it is not realistic to have a policy which prohibits pupils from taking phones to school. Not only would it be impractical to forbid pupils from carrying them (when the latest phones are so slim they can easily be hidden) but it is recognised that parents may be concerned for health & safety reasons if their child were not allowed to carry a phone at all considering the distances some children have to travel to and from school.

However, it is the Board's policy and aim to lessen intrusions on and distractions to children's learning, and prohibit the unauthorised use by pupils of mobile phones while on school premises, grounds, or off site activities e.g. school swimming, as follows...

## Guidelines for Children

The Board discourages and asks all parents to discourage pupils from bringing mobile devices to school on the above grounds. When a pupil does bring a device to school the following rules apply:

1. Children are not allowed the unauthorised use of mobile phones/electronic games/devices during school hours.
2. Pupils who do carry phones must have prior parent/school agreement.
3. Pupil phones must be switched off and kept in their school bag and **not** on their person during the school day and may not be used for any purpose on school premises, grounds or during off-site school activities such as swimming or sports activities.
4. Phones must be clearly labelled or marked with child's name.
5. The school will not be liable for the replacement of lost, stolen or damaged devices.
6. Pupils may choose to hand in their phones at reception in the morning where they will be held securely until the school day is over.
7. Parents are reminded that in case of emergency the school office is the first point of contact and also that children who need to contact home during school hours may do so through the school secretary using the school landline phone.
8. When on a school outing or activity out of the school building children are not allowed to carry their phone/device.
9. The school cannot take responsibility for pupils communicating with each other outside of school time i.e. before 9.20am and after 3.00pm during school days and during weekends or holiday periods.
10. The Acceptable Use Policy, Anti-bullying Policy, Anti-cyberbullying Policy and Code of Behaviour also link with this Mobile Phone Policy about procedures and sanctions to be followed in the case of cyber-bullying, illegal downloads, and/or other breaches of policy.
11. If a pupil is found using a phone or device contrary to above rules it will be confiscated and not returned until a parent collects it.

The school now incorporates this policy into the Code of Behaviour and will treat breaches of rules as they would treat any other breach of the Code:

12. If a pupil is found taking photographs or video footage with a mobile device of either other pupils or staff or sharing inappropriate messages this will be regarded as a serious offence/gross misbehaviour and disciplinary action will be taken according to school policy.
13. If images of other pupils or staff have been taken, the device will be confiscated and will not be returned to the parent of the pupil until the images have been removed in the presence of a member of staff.

### **Guidelines for staff**

1. During teaching time and pupil contact time, while on playground duty and during meetings, mobile phones will be switched off or put on 'silent' or 'discreet' mode.
2. Personal calls are normally confined to staff's own break times. In cases of emergency staff is expected to use discretion in relation to calls.
3. In very exceptional circumstances, the staff may, with the permission of the principal, have their phones on during the day as part of agreed school plans e.g. for support and safety reasons when staff work with a child outside the classroom
4. Mobile phones or devices may be used by teachers as an educational resource in school. Teachers would monitor such usage rigorously. Staff are reminded that it is best practice to use school devices to record children's work and to delete same when printed or recorded on pupil file/folder. However, if this is not possible staff may use their own device to take photos of school work once they are deleted as above.
5. Classroom supervision is usually organised if a class teacher must contact other professionals or outside agencies in relation to a child using office phone.
6. Staff are reminded to be careful when using their personal mobile phones to contact parents. Staff has access to the school landline if calls need to be made to parents. On activities away from school staff may have to use their phone to contact the school who will then contact parents as required. Staff should not give out their personal phone number to pupils.

### **Guidelines for Parents and Visitors:**

- We request that parents do not use mobile phones in the school building or grounds.
- We respectfully ask that mobile devices are not used to take photographs or record video in the school building or grounds unless authorised by the school.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

All staff share responsibility in the co-ordination and implementation of this policy.

### **Evaluation**

This policy is monitored on an ongoing basis and amendments added as new technology comes on stream.

### **Implementation**

This policy has been in place since 2003 and has been reviewed and amended regularly, most recently on February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2017. Parental & staff views were also sought during March 2017. No amendments or comments were proposed by anyone. It was approved and ratified by the Board of Management at a meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> May 2017.

Signed: Johnny Mee, Chairperson

Date: 11/5/2017