



Mercy College Woodford

Mobile Phone/Smart Device Policy

Background

Schools play a vital role in promoting wellbeing and mental health by equipping young people with the knowledge, skills, and competencies to deal with the challenges that may impact on their wellbeing.

It is recognised that technology is ever evolving and increasingly part of everyday life. However, excessive mobile phone use, and screentime generally, can have a detrimental impact on students' concentration and academic performance. Ensuring that students are not using their mobile phone for personal use during the school day can help to address these issues and foster an environment more conducive to learning, as well as supporting in-person engagement with their peers.

The policy to restrict the use of phones by students during the school day, outside of limited exceptions, will enable schools to provide a phone-free environment, to support students' wellbeing, concentration, academic performance, and development. It will provide a space for young people to disconnect from their online world and can assist in supporting them to become less dependent on their mobile phones.

Research including the UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report "Technology in Education a tool on whose terms", and the Norwegian Screen Use Committee Report on the impact of the use of mobile phones during the school day on wellbeing and academic performance, will continue to inform department policy and resources in this area.

Consultation Process

As part of the development of this policy, a comprehensive consultation process was undertaken to ensure that the perspectives of all key stakeholders were considered. Staff members contributed through structured discussions and feedback sessions, providing insights based on their professional experience and day-to-day interactions. Students were engaged through information provided and focus groups, allowing their voices to be heard and their needs reflected in the policy. Parents were also consulted via questionnaires, offering valuable input from a home and family perspective. This inclusive approach ensured the policy is balanced, relevant, and responsive to the needs of the entire school community.

Rationale

The development of digital competence including digital and media literacy to support young people remains of key importance, to enable them to reach their potential and participate fully as global citizens in a digital world.

The capacity of many devices to take photographs, make video or sound recordings could lead to child protection and data protection issues with regard to inappropriate capture, use or distribution of images.

While Mercy College is already managing the use of personal mobile phones by students during the school day through existing policies, including the Acceptable Use Policy, this policy now formalises the procedures for use of such devices during the school day, including during breaks and at lunchtime.

In line with circular 0045/2025, schools are required to implement a policy to restrict the use of and access to, personal mobile phones by students in all recognised schools for the duration of the school day.

The aim of this policy is to build on the existing school policies in this area and will enable children and young people to disconnect from their online world and connect more with their peers for the duration of the school day.

This policy is intended to:

- improve the learning environment in Mercy College by reducing distraction
- reduce the risk of cyberbullying and access to inappropriate content during school hours
- increase traditional social interactions between students at school break times

Relationship To School Ethos

The use of mobile phones and smart devices contravene the provision of a safe and secure school environment and is not always conducive to learning – a provision which is central to our mission statement and ethos of Mercy College.

Internal School Procedures

The following are the guidelines for mobile phone and smart devices in Mercy College:

- Students should not bring mobile phones/smart devices into school
- Students are not allowed to use mobile phones/smart devices during school hours or on school premises
- Parents/Guardians should use the school office as their point of contact should the need arise
- If an exemption to the policy may apply, parents/guardians must apply in writing to the school principal
- Staff are permitted to use their mobile phone for school related business and should not be used for personal reasons during teacher-student contact time

School Trips & Outings

Students are not permitted to bring mobile phones and other personal devices with them on school trips and outings. Supervising teachers will have access to contact numbers in the event that it is necessary to make contact with a parent/guardian.

Possible Exemptions That May Apply

As a school, we will adopt a compassionate and common-sense approach, that is fair and transparent in application.

Exemptions should only apply for medical, wellbeing or specific practical reasons, or for reasons related to students' special educational needs. The exemptions should allow students to access their phones for the specific reason outlined in the exemption, and not for general use.

The examples below are not exhaustive and consideration will be on a case-by-case basis.

Examples of some of the possible issues where exemptions are justified may include but are not limited to:

- Diabetes blood glucose monitor and/or insulin delivery mechanism.
- Blood pressure monitoring.
- Seizure conditions where monitoring via a mobile phone app is needed.
- Additional/special educational needs, for specific tasks relating to a student's visual impairment, hearing impairment, speech and language impairments.
- Under the supervision of a staff member, a child with special educational needs may be permitted to use a smart device in class if included in a school support plan (SSP) as part of a specific learning programme.
- Access by an English as an Additional Language (EAL) student to specific applications to support language, if directed by a teacher as no appropriate device is available

Breach of Policy

In the event that a student is found in possession of a mobile phone or smart device in violation of this policy, the following disciplinary measures will be enforced:

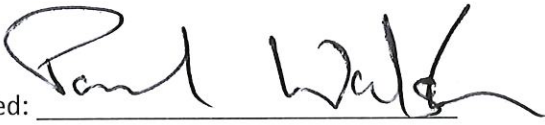
- **First Offence (within the school year):** The device will be confiscated and retained in the Deputy Principal's office until 3:50 pm, at which time the student may retrieve it.
- **Second Offence (within the school year):** The device will be confiscated and held in the Deputy Principal's office until 3:50 pm. Collection of the device will only be permitted by the student's parent or guardian.
- **Subsequent Offences:** For any further breaches, the device will be confiscated and retained until 3:50 pm, with collection exclusively by the parent or guardian. Additionally, the student will be subject to appropriate disciplinary sanctions, in line with the school code of behaviour.

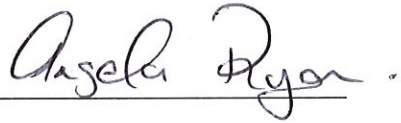
It should be noted that it is a criminal offence to use a mobile phone or personal device to menace, harass or offend another person. As such, if action as sanctioned by the school in this regard is deemed ineffective, as with all such incidents, the school may consider it appropriate to involve other external agencies such as the Gardai.

Parents are reminded that the school office remains the first point of contact and the office will ensure that the student is reached quickly or a message delivered efficiently.

The school will not be liable for replacing mobile phones or other devices that are lost, stolen or damaged.

This policy was adopted on October 23rd 2025

Signed: 
Chairperson

Signed: 
Principal