



Mobile Phone and Smart Device Policy

Staff FAQs



Introduction:

This FAQ document aims to provide as much information as possible in relation to the implementation of the mobile phone and smart devices policy in St. Caimin's Community School. This document should be read in conjunction with the Mobile Phone and Smarty Device Policy. It is hoped that this document will answer the most common questions that have arisen during our consultation with staff, parents and students in relation to the use of mobile phones and smart devices.

Questions about the policy:

What is meant by the term phone free zone?	<i>A phone free zone means that during the school day students are not permitted to have access to their phones. Students will store their mobile devices, which must be powered off, in locked pouches on their person or in their school bag or in their locker during the school day.</i>
What devices are covered under the policy?	<i>This policy includes mobile phones, smart watches, tablets and any other similar portable electronic device. Please note that laptops or tablets authorised for use in school for educational purposes are not included in this policy.</i>
Why are changes being made to the current Mobile Phone Policy?	<i>This policy was reviewed as it was identified as a short term (immediate) target in the school plan 2023-2028 and also in response to advice from the Minister of Education to reduce the use of mobile phones in schools. St. Caimin's Community School recognises that mobile phones and smart devices are now an integral part of young people's culture and way of life and can be of considerable value when used in an appropriate manner. It also recognises that phones can be a distraction, can hinder communication and socialisation and can increase levels of anxiety and stress for many students.</i>
What did the consultation process involve?	<i>The consultation on this review started in September 2024. All stakeholders had the opportunity to participate in focus groups and to complete an online questionnaire. Based on the feedback received a discussion document was created. A review group was established and prepared a draft document that went out for further consultation. Changes were implemented and the policy was then ratified by the Board of Management.</i>
Do Teachers, administrative staff, or other staff have to comply?	<i>No. The phone free arrangements apply to students only. However, we may choose to minimise our visible use of phones when in the presence of students.</i>
When will the implementation of the policy start?	<i>The policy will commence on return to school in August 2025.</i>

Questions on how the policy will be implemented:

How will the phone free zone be created?	<i>If a student wants to bring their device to school, it will be placed into their pouch before they enter the school grounds. The phone must be powered off before being placed in the pouch. Pouches will be provided to students at the beginning of the school year. Students can store this pouch on their person, in their school bag or in their locker.</i>
In terms of implementation, what is my responsibility as a subject teacher?	<i>All staff have shared responsibility to implement the approved policies of the school. As a subject teacher, the primary responsibility relates to confiscating the device if the student is found to be in breach of the policy. Staff are asked to challenge any breach of the policy and take the confiscated phone to the Principal's/Deputy Principal's office.</i>

<p>What will happen if a student is found to be in breach of the policy?</p>	<p><i>If a student is found to be in breach of this policy the student will be sanctioned as outlined in the policy document. There are different sanctions depending on whether it is the first or subsequent breach of the policy.</i></p>
<p>What happens if a student is found to be in breach of the policy but refuses to hand up a mobile phone/smart device?</p>	<p><i>Should a student be found to be using a mobile phone/smart device during the school day without the teacher's permission and refuses to hand up the phone/device, they will be sent immediately to the Deputy Principal/Principal. This will be considered a breach of the school's code of behaviour and more serious sanctions could be applied.</i></p>
<p>I used to use mobile devices as a teaching aid – What now?</p>	<p><i>A teacher may decide to use a mobile device during a lesson, at their discretion, but once the device is no longer required it will be switched off and returned to the pouch. Teachers will be provided with devices to unlock the pouches and must ensure that all devices have been powered off and are in a locked pouch at the end of the activity.</i></p>
<p>What if a students needs to urgently speak to their parent/guardian or vice versa?</p>	<p><i>As is current practice, Parents/guardians arrange to contact students through the school office. A student, who wishes to go home for any reason during the school day, must arrange to do so through the Secretary/Deputy Principal/Principal and not independently by mobile phone/smart device. This ensures that correct procedures for leaving school before the ending of classes for that day are observed. Responsibility cannot be taken by the school authorities for students who arrange independently to go home without following proper procedure. Any such arrangement is a breach of the Code of Behaviour and this policy. Parents/Guardians may arrange to contact students through the office (061) 364211 and authorise the absence through VShare.</i></p> <p><i>We ask parents/guardians to co-operate and support this policy by not contacting students by mobile phone/smart device during the school day.</i></p>
<p>What happens if the mobile phone and/or electronic device get confiscated?</p>	<p><i>Confiscated phones will be kept in a secure location in the Principal's/Deputy Principal's office. Parents/Guardians will receive a message to say that the phone has been confiscated. It will also be recorded in VShare.</i></p> <p><i>Depending on the number of times the phone has been confiscated different sanctions will apply.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1st offence: <i>Phone will be confiscated and given to the Principal. The phone will be kept until the end of the school day. The student can collect the phone. Parents will be informed by text message and minus point will be recorded on VShare.</i> • 2nd offence: <i>Phone will be confiscated and given to the Principal. The phone will be kept until the end of the school day. Parents/Guardians can collect the phone. Parents/Guardians will be informed by text message and minus point will be recorded on VShare. If parents/guardians cannot collect the phone it can be collected by parents/guardians the following day.</i> • 3rd and subsequent offences: <i>Phone will be confiscated and given to the principal. Parents will be informed by text message and minus point will be recorded on VShare. Phone will be kept overnight, and parents/guardians can collect the phone the following day. The student will also complete a lunchtime detention.</i>
<p>Can students access their mobile phones and/or electronic devices during breaks or lunch?</p>	<p><i>No. St Caimin's Community School is a Phone Free Zone for students during school hours including breaks and lunch periods. All staff are asked to help ensure that mobile devices are not being used during breaks or lunch.</i></p> <p><i>A wide range of extracurricular activities are available to students during these times and it is hoped that the removal of mobile phones will increase participation and socialisation.</i></p>

<p>What about school trips, events, activities that take place off site etc.?</p>	<p><i>In exceptional circumstances (e.g. school trips, out of school matches, foreign trips, out of school hours trips etc.), prior permission may be granted by school management for the use of the mobile phones on request by staff member responsible for the activity. This allows students to contact teachers or Parents/Guardians as necessary. Students participating in school related activities must abide by the relevant rules. Inappropriate use of mobile phones/electronic devices during school related activities is strictly forbidden and sanctions will apply.</i></p>
<p>What if a student forgets or loses their pouch?</p>	<p><i>In the event of a student forgetting their pouch, the student will be asked to leave their phone in the main office for the duration of the school day.</i></p> <p><i>Any loss or damage of the pouch, which renders it unusable, will result in the students funding a replacement pouch at a cost of €15.</i></p>

Questions on exceptional circumstances:

<p>What if a student has a medical requirement to have access to their mobile phone?</p>	<p><i>Consideration will be given to students who require their device for any of the following reasons:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Medical device / Disability aid</i> • <i>Assistive and Augmentative Communication</i> • <i>Students who use a translator app</i> <p><i>Prior written agreement is required with school management in consultation with students/parents/guardians. Students in this category will be required to restrict their phone use to the purpose stated in their written agreement. School management may require student devices to be locked on the relevant app during school hours using guided access or app pinning.</i></p>
<p>What if a child is anxious and finds accessing their mobile phone comforting, can this be facilitated?</p>	<p><i>Unfortunately, no.</i></p> <p><i>It is recognised some students do struggle with anxiety or might be shy or not be inclined to engage in activities during break and lunch times. However, a wide range of group and individual activities are available and it is hoped a phone free environment will encourage engagement and participation.</i></p> <p><i>Additionally, the Students Support Team would take the view that mobile phones are in fact themselves a source of significant anxiety and at times distress for students, even to those who find comfort in them.</i></p> <p><i>Students who experience anxiety or are lonely and finding it difficult to socialise are strongly encouraged to link in with the Student Support Team. They manage these issues all the time and work with individual students to find solutions and improve their sense of wellbeing.</i></p> <p><i>A weekly Student Support Team meeting is also held and actively monitors these issues. Additionally, if you are aware that your child is experiencing difficulties in these areas, please reach out to the relevant Year Head.</i></p>