



Mobile Phone and Smart Device Policy

Student 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 you are not permitted to have access to your phones. You will store your mobile devices, which must be powered off, in locked pouches. These pouches can be kept on your person or in your school bag or in your 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.</i> <i>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>
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 you want to bring your device to school, it will be placed into your pouch before you enter the school grounds. The phone must be powered off before being placed in the pouch. Pouches will be provided to you at the beginning of the school year. You can store this pouch on your person, in your school bag or in your locker.</i>
What will happen if I am found to be in breach of the policy?	<i>If you are found to be in breach of this policy you 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>
Am I allowed to use mobile phones and/or electronic devices in school?	<i>The broad answer to this questions is no. However there is one exception. A teacher may decide to use the 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.</i>

<p>What if I need to contact my parent/guardian in an emergency?</p>	<p><i>As is current practice, you should arrange to contact your parent/guardian through the school office. If you wish to go home for any reason during the school day, you 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 VSware.</i></p>
<p>Other than in an emergency, how can I contact my parent/guardian if I need to get information to them?</p>	<p><i>We fully understand that you may need to communicate with their parent/guardian during the day for family reasons. As is current practice, these communications can be made through the main office.</i></p> <p><i>You will also have access to your mobile phones at the end of the school day to pick up any messages that are less urgent.</i></p>
<p>What if I become unwell during the day and I need to get collected?</p>	<p><i>As is current practice, If your become unwell, we will contact your parent/guardian immediately through the main office to update you on your child's condition.</i></p> <p><i>Communication through the school office is always a requirement for health and safety reasons and no arrangement relating leaving school during school hours should be made without going directly through the school office where their authorised absence can be recorded and permission given to leave school grounds.</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 VSware.</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 VSware.</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 VSware. 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 VSware. 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 I access my 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 you during school hours including breaks and lunch periods.</i></p> <p><i>A wide range of extracurricular activities are available during these times and it is hoped that the removal of mobile phones will increase participation and socialisation.</i></p>
<p>What if I forget or lose my pouch?</p>	<p><i>In the event of forgetting your pouch, you will be asked to leave your 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 you funding a replacement pouch at a cost of €15.</i></p>

Questions on exceptional circumstances:

<p>What if I have a medical requirement to have access to my mobile phone?</p>	<p>Consideration will be given if you require your device for any of the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Medical device / Disability aid• Assistive and Augmentative Communication• If you use a translator app <p>Prior written agreement is required with school management in consultation with students/parents/guardians. If you are in this category you will be required to restrict your phone use to the purpose stated in the written agreement. School management may require student devices to be locked on the relevant app during school hours using guided access or app pinning.</p>
<p>I am anxious and find accessing my mobile phone comforting, can this be facilitated?</p>	<p>Unfortunately, no.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>If you are feeling anxious or are lonely and finding it difficult to socialise you should let your Year Head know. They manage these issues all the time and work with individual students to find solutions and improve their sense of wellbeing.</p> <p>A weekly Student Support Team meeting is also held and actively monitors these issues.</p>