

St Paul's High School, Bessbrook

Mobile Phone Policy

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1. Mission Statement

- 1.1 St Paul's High School is a Catholic community, committed to providing high quality education in an atmosphere of mutual respect where each individual is valued as an important member of our school family. We value the personal, moral, social and spiritual development of each student, encouraging respect for self and others including the core values of truth, kindness, integrity and compassion.

2. Rationale

- 2.1. The school's baseline position has been a gradual discouragement of pupil use of mobile phones in school for Key Stage 3 pupils. This commenced for pupils entering Year 8, in 2018. Exceptional circumstances have always been taken into consideration, such as supporting pupils with medical needs who may need to use a mobile device. This approach to Key Stage 3 has been widely supported by the school community and sanctions for non-adherence to this approach have been dealt with within our Promoting Positive Behaviour Policy.
- 2.2 The recent DE Circular 2024/14 '[Guidance for Schools on Pupils' Personal Use of Mobile Phones and other Similar Devices during the School Day](#)' aims to provide advice and support to all schools to ensure there is a greater consistency in approach and that it is informed by emerging evidence.
- 2.3 There is significant and growing evidence of the positive impact of an approach restricting mobile phone use during the school day, which has been implemented in a significant number of countries. Both the United

Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) have recognised that the use of digital devices, such as mobile phones for leisure during the school day, can negatively impact students' academic performance. Aligned to this, there are increasing concerns regarding the impact of mobile phones on children and young people's development. A number of studies have raised issues about the wider impact of phones on children and young people's mental health and wellbeing.

2.4 In relation to mobile phone use in school, there are risks associated with children and young people bringing their own personal devices into schools. There is significant potential for misuse, both in terms of low-level disruption in classes and more serious misuse such as bullying and harassment of children and young people as well as staff. Such behaviour is unacceptable in any context. Such inappropriate use of this technology can also detract from their appropriate use in learning and can involve teaching staff, children and young people, and parents in investigations which can cause significant disruption to the school and wider community.

2.5 Research has found correlations between mobile phone restriction in schools and a range of positive outcomes, including reduced bullying, an overall reduction in social media usage, increased healthy play, reduced distraction and improved academic attainment. Overall, the academic evidence of the positive impact of prohibited use is increasing.

3. Aims of this policy

- 3.1 To be informed by guidance from the Department of Education, as published in Circular 2024/14, and related studies, and implement a Mobile Phone Use Policy that is reasonable for pupils, parents, staff and school governors.
- 3.2 To be informed by advice from Safer Schools NI and their 'SMART Mobile Phone Guidance for Schools' document [Safer Schools NI](#).
- 3.3 To create a safe and secure learning environment, where pupils can focus and learn to the best of their abilities without unnecessary distractions.
- 3.4 To support pupils and their parents and carers to navigate the complexities of managing appropriate mobile phone use, whilst balancing educational objectives with the practical realities of modern technology.
- 3.5 To assist pupils in forming good lifestyle habits regarding mobile phone use.

4. Use of Mobile Phones by pupils

- 4.1 Pupils in Years 8, 9 and 10 are not permitted to take mobile phones into school during the school day.
- 4.2 Pupils in Years 11, 12, 13 and 14 are permitted to take mobile phones into school during the school day.

- 4.3. These devices must be never used, never seen, never heard during classes or on the corridors, unless advised by the teacher as part of a teaching and learning activity.
- 4.4 These devices can be used, within reason, during recreational lunch time.

5. Exceptions to the above positions

- 5.1 As per DE Circular 2024/14, St Paul's wishes to ensure a bespoke and tailored approach dependent on the particular needs of their schools and individual pupils:
- 5.2 For example, those pupils who require support for a medical condition or have special or additional educational need. Notably, pupils with diabetes may need access to their phone to monitor glucose levels.
- 5.3 For example, we will also be mindful that there may be safeguarding reasons which require pupils to have access to their phones and pupils who are young carers are also likely to require access to their phone.
- 5.4 For example, where a child lives between two homes and may need to bring their phone to assist the change at the weekend. In this instance, the child should leave the mobile phone at School Reception, and it can be collected at the end of the school day.
- 5.5 For example, during end of year day trips and residential trips, pupils are permitted to take their mobile phones with them. This is in the event of getting lost and needing to contact somebody. In the case of residential trips, all mobile phones will be taken from pupils at 10pm and can be collected in the morning. This is for safeguarding purposes and will be communicated to parents during all trip briefings.

- 5.6 There may be other exceptional circumstances where we should consider making adaptations to this policy for specific pupils and each case will be judged on its own merit.

6. Sanctions for non-adherence to the Mobile Phone Use Policy

- 6.1 If a pupil in Key Stage 3 is found to be using a mobile phone during the school day, this will be recorded on the SIMS Behaviour Module and the phone will be confiscated for three working days. The mobile phone must be collected by the child's parent or carer at the end of the third working day following the confiscation.
- 6.2 If pupils in Key Stages 4 or 5 are found to not be adhering to the policy a verbal reminder will be given. Staff can use their discretion as to whether the breach merits recording on the SIMS Behaviour Module. Only in serious breaches, is it necessary to confiscate mobile phones from pupils in this age range.

7. Role and responsibilities of the pupil

- To follow the Mobile Phone Use Policy and other related policies
- To always use a mobile phone in a responsible manner

8. Role and responsibilities of the parent/guardian

- To support the school in relation to the Mobile Phone Use Policy

- To accept any school sanctions exercised in the event of any breaches
- To accept responsibility for any damage to phones that are brought into school by their child

9. Role and responsibilities of the school

- To implement the Mobile Phone Use Policy
- To communicate expectations with pupils at the start of each academic year, with interval reminders
- To communicate expectations with parents at the various start of key stage Parent Information Evenings
- To promote responsible use of mobile phones through staff showing pupils a positive example.

10. Role and responsibilities of the Board of Governors

- To ensure there is a written Mobile Phone Policy in place that is reflective of any published guidance
- To ensure that the expected standards of the Mobile Phone Policy are upheld
- To ratify the policy and ensure that it is reviewed every two years, or when guidance changes
- To monitor the effectiveness of the policy.

11. Related School Policies

11.1 This policy is set within the broader school context of Pastoral Care and, as such, should be implemented in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Pastoral Care Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Promoting Positive Behaviour Policy
- Inclusion Policy
- SEN Policy
- Empowering and Effective Use of ICT Policy

12. Dissemination of the Policy

12.1 Pastoral policies are signposted annually during our Parental Induction and Information Evenings (June & September) and are available on the school's website. A policy overview is emailed to all parents at the start of each academic year.

12.2 Staff are reminded about their roles and responsibilities in relation to mobile phone use.

12.3 Pupils are reminded about their roles and responsibilities in relation to mobile phone use.

13. Monitoring and evaluation

13.1 The effectiveness of the policy will be measured by:

- A reduction in the number of breaches at each key stage.

14. Review

- 14.1 This policy has been written in partnership with the Student Council. It will be reviewed regularly in response to on-going advice and training. It will form part of the school's overall Pastoral Care Policy.