



Digital Device/Mobile Phone Policy

Introduction and Aims

At Maghaberry Primary School the welfare and wellbeing of our pupils is paramount. The aim of the Digital Devices/Mobile Phone Policy is to allow users to benefit from modern communication technologies, whilst promoting safe and appropriate practice through establishing clear and robust acceptable mobile user guidelines. This is achieved through balancing protection against potential misuse with the recognition that mobile phones are effective communication tools. It is recognised that it is the enhanced functions of many mobile phones which cause most concern, offering distractions and disruption to the working day, and which are most susceptible to misuse – including the taking and distribution of indecent images, exploitation, and bullying. However, as it is difficult to detect specific usage, this policy refers to ALL mobile communication devices.

Scope

This policy applies to all individuals who have access to personal mobile phones/digital devices on site. This includes staff, volunteers, governors, children, young people, parents, carers, visitors, and contractors. This list is not exhaustive.

This policy should also be read in relation to the following documentation:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.
- Anti-Bullying Policy.

Code of Conduct

A Code of Conduct is promoted with the aim of creating a co-operative workforce where staff work as a team, have high values, and respect each other; thus creating a strong morale and sense of commitment, leading to the highest standards across the school. Our aim is therefore that all practitioners:

- have a clear understanding of what constitutes misuse;
- know how to minimise risk;
- avoid putting themselves into compromising situations which could be misinterpreted and lead to possible allegations;
- understand the need for professional boundaries and clear guidance regarding acceptable use;

- are responsible for self-moderation of their own behaviours; and
- are aware of the importance of reporting concerns promptly.

It is fully recognised that imposing rigid regulations on the actions of others can be counterproductive. An agreement of trust is therefore promoted regarding the carrying and use of mobile phones/digital devices within the setting, which is agreed to by all users.

Personal Mobile Phones/Smart Watches – Staff

- Staff are not permitted to make/receive calls/texts during contact time with children. Emergency contact should be made via the school office.
- Staff should have their phones/watches on silent or switched off and out of sight (eg in a drawer, handbag or pocket), during class time.
- Mobile phones/smart watches should not be used in a space where children are present (eg classroom, playground).
- Use of phones/smart watches (including receiving/sending texts and emails), should be limited to non-contact time when no children are present eg in office areas, staff room, empty classrooms.
- It is also advised that staff use the “passcode” security function to protect access to their phones.
- Should there be exceptional circumstances (eg acutely sick relative), then staff should make the principal aware of this and can have their phone in case of needing to receive an emergency call.
- Staff should report any usage of mobile devices which causes them concern, to the Principal.

Mobile Phones for Work-Related Purposes

Photographs/stills or video footage of students should be taken using school equipment for purposes authorised by the school, where possible. Photos/videos taken with personal devices should only be for legitimate school/educational purposes, authorised by the principal and the images/recordings deleted immediately after being transferred to the secure school/C2K approved storage.

We recognise that mobile phones provide a useful means of communication on off-site activities and school trips. However, staff should ensure that:

- mobile use on these occasions is appropriate and professional;
- mobile phones should not be used to make contact with parents during school trips (unless in exceptional circumstances and agreed with the principal);– all relevant communications should be made via the school office; and
- where parents are accompanying trips, they are informed not to make contact with other parents (via calls, text, email or social networking), during the trip, or use their phone to take photographs of children.

Personal Mobiles – Pupils

We recognise that mobile phones are part of everyday life for many children and that they can play an important role in helping pupils to feel safe and secure. However, we also recognise that they can prove a distraction in school and can provide a means for bullying or inappropriate behaviour. Therefore:

- pupils are not permitted to have mobile phones at school or on school trips;
- if in exceptional circumstances a parent wishes his/her child to bring a mobile phone to school in order to contact a parent after school:
 - ❖ the parent must discuss the issue first with their child's teacher;
 - ❖ the phone must be handed in, switched off, to the school office first thing in the morning and collected by the child at home time (the phone is left at the owner's risk);
- mobile phones brought to school without permission will be confiscated and returned at the end of the school day.

Smart Watches – Pupils

Smart watches that are internet and camera enabled, have the capacity to record and store voice notes or to communicate through Bluetooth, mobile data, or Wi-Fi, pose significant potential safeguarding concerns. For these reasons smart watches are not permitted in school. Simple and basic "fitbit" type watches with limited functions such as step counting are permitted, if used responsibly.

Pupils found to be using the features of a watch in any way that breaches school rules or poses a safeguarding risk, will have the device confiscated and parents/guardians will be notified.

Music Tutors, Volunteers, Visitors, and Contractors

All Governors, music tutors, volunteers, visitors, and contractors are expected to follow our Mobile Phone/Digital Devices Policy as it relates to staff whilst on the premises. On arrival such visitors will be informed of our expectations regarding the use of mobile phones.

Parents

While we would prefer parents not to use their mobile phones while at school, we recognise that this would be impossible to regulate and that many parents see their phones as an essential means of communication at all times.

We therefore ask that parents' usage of mobile phones whilst on the school site is courteous and appropriate to the school environment.

We also allow parents to photograph or video school events such as sports day, using their mobile phones – but insist that parents do not publish images (eg on social networking sites), that include any children other than their own.

Dissemination

This Digital Device/Mobile Phone Policy will be shared with staff and volunteers as part of their induction. It will also be available to parents via the school office and website.