

Newtown Junior School

Draft - Phone and Devices Policy

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Mobile Phone and Devices Policy

1.0 Purpose and Rationale

The purpose of this policy is to ban the use of and access to personal mobile phones by pupils during the school day in line with Circular 0044/2025 from the Department of Education and Youth. The policy aims to create a distraction-free learning environment that prioritises safety and educational outcomes in our school. We recognise the disruptive potential of smart devices – including smartphones, smart watches, tablets, laptops, or any device that is internet-connected or can record audio or video.

2.0 General Policy Statement

All students are prohibited from using any non-school-owned smart devices without express teacher permission on school premises during school hours. The school provides enough smart devices for its pupils through its tablets and other smart technology.

Children who need to contact home during school hours may do so through the School Secretary using the school landline.

Parents are reminded that in cases of emergency, the School Office remains the first point of contact and can ensure that your child is reached quickly, and a message passed onto them.

Staff are permitted to use their phones for school-related business only or for emergencies. Staff should not use their phones for personal reasons during teacher-pupil contact time.

3.0 Exceptions

The only exceptions to this rule are:

Assistive Technology:

Students who require assistive technology, approved by the NCSE, can use their smart device for specific purposes as outlined by their class teacher or other member of staff.

Medical Exceptions:

Students who require a smart device or similar equipment for medical purposes must submit relevant documentation (e.g. a doctor's note) to the school's administration for approval.

Pre-Verbal Communication:

Children who need a device to communicate their needs must complete an application outlining the necessity of the device. Approval will be granted on a strictly controlled basis.

Any Other Reasons:

Parents/guardians who wish for their child to be allowed to use a smart device in school for any other reason must complete the form at Appendix A and return it to the school principal. Until permission is granted, the child will not be allowed to use the device on school premises. In the case where permission is granted, the mobile phone/smart device must be turned off and stored in the Secretary's Office. It must be handed to the office before school starts and collected after class ends. The device cannot be switched on until the student leaves the school premises.

4.0 School Tours and Off-Site Activities

No Use of Personal Smart Devices

During school tours and any off-site activities, students are prohibited from using smart devices (including any internet-connected device or any **device capable of recording audio or video**).

Resource Provision

Where needed, the school will provide any necessary technological resources for educational purposes during these activities.

Compliance and Enforcement

Students found using personal smart devices during these events will be subject to the same measures as outlined in this policy.

5.0 Implementation and Enforcement

5.1 Clear Communication

The school will clearly communicate this policy to all students, parents, and staff via assemblies, and the school website.

5.2 Enforcement Procedures

It is recognised that with the best will in the world, it is impossible to monitor all children, all of the time. There are limits on what staff are allowed to do. They cannot search schoolbags, etc. With this in mind:

- Staff will remind students that no smart devices are to be brought onto school premises during school hours.
- Teachers will monitor classrooms to ensure compliance. Any student found with a smart device on school grounds during school hours will be subject to a minimum consequence of immediate confiscation. In this situation, the school will not take responsibility for any reported loss or damage to the device while in their possession.
- It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to regularly monitor any internet-connected device their child uses (or has access to), ensuring all content is appropriate.

6.0 Offences and Consequences

Based on feedback from staff, the following offences and corresponding consequences will apply:

6.1 Unauthorised Possession

If a student is found in possession of a smart device during school hours without approved parental permission, at a minimum, the device will be confiscated and returned only upon parental collection. Repeated breaches may result in exclusion. Repeated breaches may lead to further sanctions, in line with the school's Code of Behaviour.

6.2 Unauthorised Use

If a student uses a smart device during lessons or in any manner that disrupts the learning environment or any other part of the school day, at a minimum, the device will be confiscated, and the incident recorded. In cases such as recording, viewing, or sharing explicit material, a student may be excluded from school on a first offence.

6.3 Record Keeping

The school will maintain records of all incidents involving unauthorised smart device use and/or possession, detailing the nature of the offence and the measures taken.

6.4 Exclusion

If a child fails to comply with the policy, he/she may be excluded from school in line with the school's Code of Behaviour Policy. Exclusion can take various forms from being sent home from school to suspension. In cases of very serious breaches, a child may be permanently excluded from the school. All situations will be judged on

a case-by-case basis in line with the school's Code of Behaviour Policy.

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6.5 Serious Offences

It should be noted that it is a criminal offence to use a mobile phone/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 the Gardaí.

7.0 Medical and Communication Exceptions

For students who qualify for an exception there is an application process for the use of a device.

7.1 Application Process:

Parents must write to the principal and provide supporting documentation. The principal will review each application on a case-by-case basis, ensuring that exceptions are granted only when absolutely necessary.

For approved exceptions, any permitted use of a smart device or communication device will be strictly monitored and limited to the purpose stated in the approval (e.g. managing a medical condition or essential communication for pre-verbal children).

8.0 Staff Responsibilities

8.1 Enforcement

Teachers and staff are responsible for ensuring that students comply with this policy. While they are not expected to conduct invasive searches, they must remain vigilant and take appropriate action if a breach is suspected.

8.2 Support

The school will provide clear guidelines and training for staff to handle breaches of this policy, ensuring enforcement is consistent, fair, and respectful of student rights.

9.0 Parental Involvement and Communication

9.1 Mandatory Consent Form:

Parents/guardians must sign a consent form if they wish for their child to bring a smart device onto school premises outside of authorised circumstances (i.e. for use on the bus or outside school hours)

- The mobile phone/smart device is not to be used during school hours – this includes arrival, class time, breaks and dismissal.
- The mobile phone/smart device must be turned off and stored in the Secretary's Office. It must be handed to the office before school starts and collected after class ends. The device cannot be switched on until the student leaves the school premises.
- The school will not be responsible for any loss, theft, damage, or unauthorised use of the device.
- The signed form will state that the school assumes no responsibility for loss, theft, damage, or unauthorised use of the device once it is off school premises

9.2 Policy Briefing

The school will ensure that all parents are fully informed of the new policy and its rationale via text, email and the school website.

9.3 Feedback Mechanism

A dedicated feedback channel will be established for parents to raise concerns or suggestions regarding the policy, enabling ongoing refinement as needed.

10.0 Ongoing Review

10.1 Periodic Assessment

The policy will be reviewed periodically, incorporating feedback from staff, parents, and students, as well as considering any changes in technology or educational practices.

10.2 Adjustment Process

Any proposed adjustments to the policy will be communicated in advance to all stakeholders, ensuring transparency and collective agreement on changes.

11.0 Roles and Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of all staff, families and BOM to familiarise themselves with the terms of this policy and to contribute positively to its on-going implementation within the school setting.

12.0 Success Criteria

We are committed to monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of this policy. This policy will be subject to evaluation/review on an on-going basis through:

- a) Feedback from the stakeholders.
- b) The efficient and smooth operation of the Mobile Phone Policy.
- c) Benefits to the school arising from the implementation of the Mobile Phone Policy.
- d) Revised/New DES Circulars and Guidelines.

13.0 Implementation and Review

This plan will be implemented in February 2026. This policy and its implementation will be reviewed, following input from our school community. This policy will be monitored and reviewed by the school community.

Review Date: This plan will be reviewed in Term 3 in the 2027/2028 School Year

14.0 Communication and Ratification

14.2 Communication

- This policy is made available as part of the whole school plan. The whole plan is also available in the school office for viewing. This policy will be communicated to the school community by the following means:
- BOM/Other Staff members via hardcopy in office, email and SharePoint.
- Families via hardcopy from the Office on request.
- This policy will be available on the school website.

14.2 Ratification

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 22 January 2026

Signed _____ Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed _____ Principal/Secretary, Board of Management

The content of these policies is provided for information purposes only and does not constitute legal or other advice. Whilst IPPN have reviewed these policies which were shared by our members, it does not take responsibility for any inaccuracies. The onus is on the school to ensure that any policy is up to date and aligns with the latest guidance from the respective government departments and relevant state agencies. All school policies should be approved and ratified by the Board of Management prior to publication.

Appendix A Consent Form

Student Mobile Phone/Smart Device Consent Form

Parents/Guardians must sign the consent form below and return it to the school if they wish for their child to bring a smart device onto school premises.

- The mobile phone/smart device is not to be used during school hours – this includes arrival, class time, breaks and dismissal.
- The mobile phone/smart device must be turned off, put in a labelled bag and stored in the Secretary’s Office. It must be handed to the office before school starts and collected after class ends. The device cannot be switched on until the student leaves the school premises.
- The school will not be responsible for any loss, theft, damage, or unauthorised use of the device.

Please complete the form below and return it to the school principal via the school office.

✂-----

Child: _____

Class Teacher: _____

I confirm that my child _____ needs to have their phone/smart device with them because they travel to and/or home from school alone. My child will bring the phone/smart device into school in a labelled bag and the phone will be switched off. My child will hand their phone/smart device to the school office on arrival and collect it from the office at the end of the school day. The phone/smart device will not be switched on until my child leaves the school premises.

Parent/Guardian signature: _____

Parent/Guardian signature: _____

Date: _____