



ASHBOURNE  
**EDUCATE TOGETHER**  
NATIONAL SCHOOL

# Digital Device Policy

## Introduction

The possession and use of electronic devices and mobile phones by school pupils is now extensive.

Ashbourne ETNS supports the development of technology skills and recognises the educational value digital devices can have. At the same time, the school recognises potential problems associated with electronic devices and mobile phones, some of which are listed below:

- Mobile phones can be valuable items and might render a pupil vulnerable to theft.
- Mobile phones (and their cost and level of sophistication – or otherwise) can make pupils objects of envy or disparagement and could have implications with regard to discipline and potential bullying.
- Even when apparently silent, the use of mobiles phones for texting purposes could be potentially undermining of classroom discipline.
- Use of phones with integrated cameras could lead to child protection and data protection issues with regard to inappropriate capture, use or distribution of images, sound and videos.
- Many of the above issues also pertain to I-pods, tablets, portable gaming devices, smart watches and other electronic devices. They can be very intrusive, distracting and anti-social in a school environment.

## Aims

The aim of this Digital Device Policy is to

- ensure that pupils will benefit from learning opportunities offered by electronic resources in a safe and effective manner.
- inform all members of our school community about the appropriate use of electronic devices and mobile phones at our school
- outline the procedures and processes of this policy

## **Personal Devices:**

Personal devices will not be used by children under any circumstances for school based activities. School owned devices (cameras, tablets, laptops etc) will be the only devices used during school hours or school related activities to give best assurances of pupil and staff safety. This does not apply to devices that are granted under assistive technology or are used for medical reasons. Where a device is needed for medical reasons permission must be sought from the Board of Management. The board may request further details from a medical professional.

## **Smart Watches:**

Children are not permitted to have smart watches/technology on their person or in their possession. A smart watch is defined as a watch with the ability to make/receive calls, text messages photographs and/or video content. A simple wrist watch or fitness trackers (that do not include any of the above technologies) are allowed.

## **Mobile Phones:**

The school's Board of Management accepts that it is not realistic to have a policy which prohibits pupils from taking phones to school. Not only would it be impractical to forbid pupils from carrying them, but it is believed that a number of parents would be concerned for health and safety reasons if their child were not allowed to carry a phone at all (and might therefore be unable to contact their parents in respect of any situation that might arise on their way to or from school if walking home by themselves).

## **Expectations for pupils**

- The Board encourages parents to request that children leave mobile phones at home as they are valuable and may be lost or stolen.
- Where a pupil does bring a mobile phone to school, the parent must inform the teacher in writing (Appendix A) of the request to bring a phone to school. It is the responsibility of parents to have some form of identification on the device.
- If the school does not have prior notification of devices on the premises the device may be confiscated.
- Children will not be allowed access any personal device; phones (including smart phones), tablets, smart watches, gaming devices or any other personal digital device during school hours or activities.
- Where a pupil does bring a mobile phone to school, parents must sign the Digital Device Statement (Appendix A) stating their acceptance and compliance with this policy.
- Children's phones must be switched off and put into school bags before entering the grounds.
- The phone must remain switched off and in the pupil's school bag during the school day and may not be used, for any purpose, on school premises, grounds or during off-site school activities (such as school tour or sports activities.)
- Parents are reminded that in cases of emergency, the school office remains the first point of contact and can ensure your child is reached quickly, and helped in any appropriate way.

***Where a parent feels that their child having a phone in school is essential the following will apply:***

- The school accepts no responsibility for replacement or repair of lost, stolen or damaged mobile phones. The safety and security of mobile phones is wholly a matter for pupils/parents.
- The school will not be liable for the replacement or repair of lost, stolen or damaged devices that were confiscated due to noncompliance with this policy.
- The phone must be turned off and stored in school bags before the school day starts (i.e. prior to 8.15 am or from when the child first arrives on school grounds).
- Digital devices which are not switched off may be confiscated by the class-teacher and returned only to the parent/guardian. Devices may be confiscated if children do not comply with rules regarding device storage and/or accessing a personal device during school hours or school related activities. Where a device has been confiscated the parent will be contacted with regard to the return of the device.
- The Digital Device Policy is consistent with the Code of Behaviour Policy and inappropriate use of mobile phones or any digital device will incur sanctions as per the Code of Behaviour policy and/or Anti Bullying Policy.
- Taking photographs, audio or video footage with a mobile phone or electronic device of other pupils or teachers or sharing inappropriate messages during the school day or school activities will be regarded as serious misbehaviour and sanctions will apply according to the school's Code of Behaviour Policy and/or Anti Bullying Policy.
- If a teacher has reason to believe or suspect images, audio or video of other pupils or teachers has been taken, the phone/electronic device will be confiscated and not be returned to the pupil until the content has been removed by the pupil in the presence of a teacher and parents/guardians.
- If a teacher has reason to believe or suspect that a mobile phone/digital device has unsuitable material stored on it, pupils will be required to hand over device to a teacher and parents/guardians will be asked to collect it from the school.
- Pupils sending nuisance, vulgar or inappropriate text/picture/video messages is a direct breach of the school's acceptable usage policy.
- The unauthorised taking of images, video or audio with a mobile phone camera or electronic device, still or moving is in direct breach of the school's acceptable usage policy.
- Please see AUP Policy, Code of Behaviour and Anti Bullying Policy for further information.

***Where there is a suspicion that the material on the mobile may provide evidence relating to a criminal offence the phone will be handed over to the Gardaí for further investigation. Parents will be informed in such circumstances.***

## **Digital Devices & Anti Bullying**

Parents should note that our Anti Bullying Policy currently states:

*“In the context of this policy, placing a once-off offensive or hurtful public message, image or statement on a social network site or other public forum where that message, image or statement can be viewed and/or repeated by other people will be regarded as bullying behaviour.”*

## **School Trips and Outings**

Children are not permitted to bring mobile phones / electronic devices with them on school trips and tours. Parents will be able to contact the teacher in charge via the school office. Where children are found to be using digital devices or have them on their person it will be

regarded as serious misbehaviour and sanctions will apply according to the school's Code of Behaviour Policy and/or Anti-Bullying policy.

## Guidelines for Staff

- During teaching time, while on playground duty and during meetings, mobile phones will be switched off or put on 'silent' or 'discreet' mode, with 'vibrate' off.
- Mobile Phones should be kept in a safe, secure place.
- Staff are asked to use only school devices when taking school related photographs.
- Mobile phones will not be used for texting or phone calls within teaching / pupil contact time except in the case of emergency.
- Calls for school business e.g. checking a booking for school tour, making arrangements for sporting events etc. should be done on the school phone.
- If a situation arises whereby a staff member needs to be contactable please speak to Principal or DP and necessary arrangements will be put in place. Also ensure you provide persons with the school landline, in case they are unable to contact you.
- School phone / school approved applications should be used to contact parents.

***The Board of Management advises all staff to keep their personal mobile phone number and social networking sites private.***

## Guidelines for Teachers re. confiscation

- A device may be confiscated if not stored in school bag, if not switched off or if accessed during school hours or activities.
- If a device is confiscated parents should be notified by phone or email to inform them of breach of policy and organise return of the device.
- Where a device remains in school overnight, the Principal or Deputy Principal should be notified and the device stored as much as possible in a safe place e.g. locked drawer, filing cabinet etc.

## Guidelines for Parents

- The Staff and BOM recognise the parents as the child's primary educator and believe that parents have an important role to play in ensuring their child's appropriate and safe use of electronic devices
- Parents and guardians are encouraged to regularly check their child's online activity / digital footprint. Parents are encouraged to check social media apps (e.g. Facebook, Snapchat, Viber, WhatsApp, Instagram etc.) on mobile phones and electronic devices to ensure they are aware of their child's online interaction with others and approve of same.
- Parents/guardians are encouraged to talk with their child regularly about their use of electronic devices and discuss who their child is interacting with and the content of such interactions.
- Parents are asked to attend internet safety talks held in the school at least once every two years.

## Legislation

The school will provide information on the following legislation relating to use of electronic devices which teachers, students and parents should familiarise themselves with:

- Data Protection (Amendment) Act 2003
- Child Trafficking and Pornography Act 1998
- Interception Act 1993
- Video Recordings Act 1989
- The Data Protection Act 1988

## Support Structures

Ashbourne ETNS endeavours to have support structures in place to ensure the appropriate use of electronic devices in school and to ensure staff, parents and pupils feel supported in same.

- The school will provide Internet Safety and Cyber Bullying talks for pupils from 4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> class.
- The school will provide Internet Safety and Cyber Bullying talks for parents and guardians to all parents in the school.
- Community Gardaí link in with classes re Internet Safety and Cyber Bullying.
- Staff will regularly partake in Continuous Professional Development in relation to AUP, internet safety and Cyber Bullying.
- The school will inform students and parents of key support structures and organisations that deal with illegal material or harmful use of the Internet.

## Sanctions

Misuse of electronic devices may result in disciplinary action, as outlined in the school's Code of Behaviour and Anti Bullying Policy

***The school also reserves the right to report any illegal activities to the appropriate authorities.***

## Review

This policy was drafted in May 2019 and will be updated in line with department guidelines.

## Ratification

This policy was ratified by the BOM

Appendix A

**Digital Device Statement**

I wish to inform the school that \_\_\_\_\_ will be in possession of a (please tick all that apply):

- Mobile/Smart Phone
- Ipad/Tablet
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Both myself and my child have read and understand the terms of the Digital Device Policy

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_