

St. Luke's NS Digital Device Policy

Developed by: Eddie Pepper in consultation with staff, parents and pupils

Introduction:

This policy was drawn up by the staff and circulated to the Board of Management (BoM), Student Council and Parents Association for observations and feedback.

The possession and use of electronic devices and mobile phones by school aged pupils is now extensive in Ireland. St. Luke's NS strongly supports the development of ICT skills and digital literacy, and recognises the great educational value digital devices can have. At the same time, the school recognises potential risks associated with smart devices and mobile phones, some of which are listed below:

- Mobile phones and devices such as smartwatches can be valuable items and could be lost, stolen or damaged in school.
- Such devices coming into school could raise, cause or contribute to issues around discipline, peer pressure and potential bullying.
- Use of phones or devices 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 other devices such as (but not limited to) i-pads, tablets, portable gaming devices, smart watches, and other electronic devices. These devices have the potential to be very intrusive and distracting in a school environment when not being used for educational purposes.
- The School has an AUP and the use of personal devices in school may be in breach of this policy.

Aims:

The aim of this Digital Device Policy is to:

- ensure that pupils will benefit from learning opportunities offered by school digital and 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 such as mobile phones, smartwatches and personal tablets will not be used by children under any circumstances in school or for school based activities such as outings, sports days etc.

School owned devices will be the only devices permitted for use during school hours or school related activities to give best assurances of pupil and staff safety.

The above 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 if connected to a smart phone and therefore can be used to make or receive calls, texts or messages. A smart watch is defined as a watch with the ability to make/receive calls, text messages, photographs and/or video content, and games. A simple wrist watch or fitness trackers (that do not include any of the above technologies/software) are allowed. In line with the uniform policy, such devices should have rubber straps.

Mobile Phones:

The school's Board of Management accepts that it is not realistic in the modern world to have a policy which completely 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.
- **Permission to bring a mobile phone to school will be granted or denied by the Board of Management.**
- **Only in exceptional circumstances will the request be granted.**
- If the school does not have prior notification of devices on the premises the device may be confiscated.
- Children will not be allowed access to 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 phone line 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 8.30 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 class teacher will contact the parent to arrange for the return of the device.
- This Digital Device Policy is linked 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/Bí Cineálta 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/Bí Cineálta 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. The Code of Behaviour will be enacted upon in this instance also.
- 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 the device to a teacher and parents/guardians will need 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 use policy and goes against our Code of Behaviour. The Anti-Bullying/Bí Cineálta Policy may also be breached in this occurrence.
- 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. The Anti-Bullying/Bí Cineálta Policy may also be breached in this occurrence.
- Please see AUP Policy, Code of Behaviour and Anti Bullying/Bí Cineálta 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/Bí Cineálta:

Parents should note that our Anti Bullying Policy/Bí Cineálta Policy state: "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 or Aladdin. 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/Bí Cineálta policy.

Guidelines for Staff:

- During teaching time, while on playground duty and during meetings, mobile phones should be switched off or put on 'silent' or 'discrete' mode, with 'vibrate' off.
- Mobile Phones/devices should be kept in a safe, secure place. **The school/board accepts no responsibility for loss or damage to staff personal belongings.**
- Staff are asked to endeavour to use school devices (iPads) when taking school related photographs. If using personal devices to take photographs, staff are required to completely delete photos once posted to the school website/shared drive in line with GDPR.
- Mobile phones should not be used for texting or phone calls within teaching / pupil contact time except in the case of emergency or for official school business (though this should also be done during non contact time).
- Mobile phones and other devices should never be used for social media or personal browsing during pupil contact time including when supervising breaks/yard.
- Calls for school business e.g. checking a booking for school tour, making arrangements for sporting events etc. are recommended to be made on the school phone.
- School phone / school approved communication channels should be used to contact parents.
- The Board of Management strongly 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 from a child if not stored in a 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 the 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 when these arise.

Legislation:

Parents and Teachers are advised to familiarise themselves with relevant legislation relating to use of electronic devices.

Support Structures:

St. Luke's NS 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.

- Internet safety lessons will be taught in September/October Annually in all classes - Webwise
- The school will endeavour to provide Internet Safety and Cyber Bullying talks for pupils from 3rd – 6th class.
- The school will endeavour to provide Internet Safety and Cyber Bullying talks for parents and guardians to all parents in the school.
- Community Gardaí will be asked to link in with classes re Internet Safety and Cyberbullying.
- Staff will partake in Continuous Professional Development in relation to AUP, internet safety and Cyber Bullying on an ongoing basis as the need arises.

- 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/Bí Cineálta Policy.

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

Review:

This policy was drafted in October 2024 and approved by the Board of Management in January 2025 and will be updated as necessary in line with department/legal guidelines. A review will take place at least every 4 years.

Ratification:

This policy was ratified by the BOM on 14/01/25.


Chairperson
Principal

Appendix A:

Digital Device Permission form

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

- Mobile/Smart Phone
- Smart Watch
- Other (please specify) _____

Reason for device in school:

I have read the following and understand all terms in the following school policies (tick when read):

- Digital Device Policy
- Acceptable Usage Policy
- Code of Behaviour

By signing this, I am agreeing to all terms of the Digital Device Policy and accompanying AUP and Code of Behaviour policies.

I confirm I as parent/guardian and my child have read and clearly understand our responsibilities with regards to these policies and are aware that sanctions may occur as a result of breaches of these policies.

Student Signature: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____