

St. Fintan's High School

Mobile Phone Policy



1. Rationale and School Mission Statement

St. Fintan's High School is a Catholic voluntary secondary school. It was founded in 1943 by the Christian Brothers and is under the trusteeship of the Edmund Rice Schools Trust (ERST). This policy is developed within the context of the School Mission Statement, 'Virtus in Arduis', outlined below, and is in line with the Edmund Rice Schools Trust Charter.

Virtus in Arduis - Achievement through hard work

This commits the school to value all students and to promote and encourage positive attitudes to the optimum development of pupils in a community that promotes christian, catholic values. The pursuit of excellence and the preparation of students for assuming a responsible role in the society is guided by the ethos and approach of Blessed Edmund Ignatius Rice.

2. Introduction

Schools play a vital role in promoting wellbeing and mental health by equipping children and young people with the knowledge, skills, and competencies to deal with the challenges that may impact on their wellbeing.

It is recognised that technology is ever evolving and increasingly part of everyday life. However, excessive mobile phone use, and screen time generally, can have a detrimental impact on students' concentration and academic performance. Ensuring that students are not using their mobile phone for personal use during the school day can help to address these issues and foster an environment more conducive to learning, as well as supporting in-person engagement with their peers.

While the school already had measures in place to restrict the personal use of mobile phones, in compliance with the Department of Education and Youth Circular 0045/2025, the school will now have a consistent approach to ensure a restriction is implemented for the duration of the school day, which includes morning break and lunchtime.

The policy to restrict the use of phones by students during the school day will enable the school to provide a phone-free environment in order to support students' wellbeing, concentration, academic performance and development. It will provide a space for students to disconnect from social media and will assist in supporting them to become less dependent on their mobile phones.

3. Scope

This policy applies to mobile phones. Smart watches, smart glasses or any other smart device which can be used to send and receive messages are not permitted in the school in any circumstance and should be left at home.

4. Objectives

The objectives of this policy are to:

- Provide clarity to students, staff and parents and ensure that students are not using their mobile phones for personal use during the school day
- Promote positive student interaction and enhance the wellbeing of all members of our school community
- Foster an environment (a) to support more in-person engagement with peers and (b) that is more conducive to learning
- Support a safe, nurturing environment where the personal dignity and rights of all members of the school community are preserved
- Continue to provide for a school environment that is free from the threat of invasion of privacy for all members of our school community
- Support our Code of Behaviour, Bí Cinealta, Social Media and Acceptable Usage policies, and associated policies, by discouraging cyberbullying in all its forms

5. Use of Pouches

To assist in the implementation of our mobile phone policy, the school has invested in pouches funded by the Department of Education and Youth.

All students in the school will be given a pouch free of charge (see section 7 below in relation to damaged or lost pouches). The responsibility to (a) look after the pouch carefully, (b) use the pouch for the safe and secure storage of their phone and (c) return the pouch at the end of the year lies with the student, supported by their parents/guardians. Each pouch will be marked with a unique identifier code and a record will be kept of each student's code. Students must return the pouch they were assigned at the end of the school year.

6. Daily Procedure:

Students must bring their pouch to school in their schoolbag every day, even if they are not bringing their phone to school. If a student does not take a phone to school, the pouch must contain a signed note from a parent to say, 'I confirm that my son does not bring his phone to school'.

Upon arrival at the school premises, students must:

1. Go to one of the pouch unlocking stations located around the school.
2. Open their locked pouch by tapping the pouch unlocking station.
3. Switch off their mobile phone.
4. Place their phone inside their pouch and lock the pouch.
5. Place their pouch in their bag.

During every class, locked pouches must remain visible on the student's desk.

The pouch remains the student's responsibility during the school day and should be stored in their schoolbag outside of lesson times, e.g. during small break, lunchtime or between classes.

Regular checks will be undertaken during the school day to ensure that pouches are locked and visible at all times. Students must present their locked pouch to any member of the school staff when directed to do so.

The pouches remain locked throughout the day for all students and they can only be unlocked at the end of the school day using one of the designated unlocking stations

Late or early departure

Students arriving late or being signed out by a parent/guardian must lock/unlock their pouches at the school office.

7. Damaged or Lost Pouches

The mobile phone pouch is the property of the school. Any loss or damage to the pouch, which renders it unusable, will result in the student being required to purchase a new one for €20. Examples of damage include ripped/cut/torn fabric, bent/cut pin, signs of force to the button on flap, the pouch opening without the unlocking station etc. This list is not exhaustive. The school management's decision about what constitutes unusable shall be binding.

Students responsible for graffiti or other purposeful damage to their own, or other student's device pouches, will be liable for sanction and full payment of a new pouch.

Students will be expected to notify the school immediately in the case of accidental damage done to the pouch. If any damage is identified when a pouch is being checked by a member of staff, it will be considered intentional unless the student has reported it previously. To avoid accidental damage, students must keep pouches closed after retrieving their phone at the end of the day.

8. Forgotten Pouches

If a student arrives at school without a phone pouch their phone will be confiscated for the remainder of the day. Students who repeatedly forget their mobile phone pouches will be sanctioned.

9. Parental contact with students:

During the school day, should a parent/guardian wish to contact their son, they may do so by telephoning the school office (01 8324632), sending an email to the school office (info@stfintanshs.ie) or visiting the school, if it is an urgent matter. In all cases, parents/guardians can then leave a message which will be delivered to their son.

10. After school activities/trips/tours

This policy applies for the duration of the school day, including morning break and lunchtime. Procedures for the management of mobile phone use during the various after school activities and trips/tours etc. will be issued by the supervising teacher in advance of that activity. separately. While these procedures will uphold the spirit of the policy in relation to the non-use

of mobile phones, they will take account of the possible need for a parent/guardian to make contact with their son after school hours when the school office is closed or during the school day if their son is taking part in an out-of-school activity.

11. Lunchtime

Students are reminded that they will not have access to their phones at lunchtime and therefore will need cash or a physical debit card if they are going out to buy lunch. They will also need their physical Food Village tag if they wish to collect pre-ordered food.

12. Sanctions

Any deliberate attempt to try to contravene or not comply with this policy will be regarded as a serious breach of the code of behavior.

If a student is found using and/or in possession of a mobile phone out of the pouch during the school day, the student will be suspended from school. If a student is found in possession of a second phone or deliberately tries to contravene this policy, they will be suspended from school. Should the student be involved in a repeat offence, a longer suspension will be imposed and the case may be referred to the Board of Management.