

# St Louis Grammar School, Ballymena



## Mobile Phone Policy 2024-2025

Governor responsible: Mrs M. Black

Date of Policy:	September 2024
To be reviewed:	September 2026

## **Overview**

This policy contains information on:

- **Use of mobile phones in school**
- **Action to be taken by teachers**
- **Sanctions for students using mobile phones**
- **Logistical procedures if phones are confiscated**

## **Rationale**

Whilst mobile phones and electronic devices can offer benefits, these must be weighed up against the negative outcomes that may occur because of their unchecked use in a school environment. There are increasing concerns regarding the impact of mobile phones on children and young people's development.

Key issues associated with significant phone use by children and adolescents include social deprivation, sleep deprivation, attention fragmentation and addiction.

### **A number of recent findings are listed below:**

- Data from Office of National Statistics (2020) suggests that one in five children (19%) aged 10-15 experienced at least one type of bullying behaviour online, and out of them, around three quarters (72%) said they experienced at least some of it at school or during school time.
- Research by Ofcom has found that older children in the UK are more likely to be bullied on a screen than in person.
- A global study of nearly 30,000 young adults found a link between the age a child received their first smartphone and a negative impact on their mental health in young adulthood <https://sapienlabs.org/age-of-first-smartphone-tablet-and-mental-wellbeing-outcomes/>
- OECD's most recent Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2022 findings have indicated that 45% of students across OECD countries feel anxious if their phones are not near them.
- The following report <https://www.stran.ac.uk/growing-up-online-in-ni> by the Centre for Research in Educational Underachievement presented evidence that many children and young people are spending much greater amounts of time online (as much as seven hours per day during weekends and holidays and four hours or more on a school day). The impact of this high usage, as reported by the young people and confirmed by their teachers, was a growing trend for pupils to come into school "wrecked" or "in a complete state" or with their "heads down... sleeping" in class.
- Similarly, the OECD has reflected that the use of smartphones and other digital devices for leisure during the school day (at break or lunch time) can be a learning distraction. Digital distraction is not merely an inconvenience; it appears to have a tangible association with learning outcomes, according to the PISA. Students who report being distracted by peers using digital devices in some, most or every maths class score significantly lower in maths tests, equivalent to three-quarters of a year's worth of education. The amount of time spent on digital devices for leisure at school also seems to correlate with a significant drop in maths scores. The OECD highlights that one action that has demonstrable impact on outcomes is a ban on smartphones at school. The PISA data suggest that such bans can be effective, although as highlighted above - effectiveness depends on enforcement.

It is our goal at St Louis Grammar School to promote the welfare and learning of our pupils, and we believe that implementing a broad 'phone-free school' policy will have a positive impact, therefore mobile phones are not permitted to be used at any time during the school day.

(There may be occasions when departments deem that it is essential to use mobile phones during a lesson for learning and teaching purposes. This can only occur with the teachers consent, in the teacher's presence with students connected to the C2k Wireless Service). See Appendix 1

**This means that:**

1. Phones must be switched off whilst on the school premises, or engaged in school activities, unless its use is explicitly authorised by a teacher or a member of school staff. Students are **not** permitted to use these devices between classes, at morning break or at lunch times.
2. Mobile phones and other electronic equipment e.g, Smart Watches etc. must not be used for any purpose e.g. phoning, texting, listening to music, taking photos, taking videos or uploading material to social media on the school premises during the school day.
3. It is strongly advised that students use passwords/pin numbers to ensure that no unauthorised activities can be made on their phones (e.g. by other students or if stolen). Students must keep their password/pin numbers confidential. Mobile phone and /or passwords should not be shared.
4. The school will not take responsibility for inappropriate usage of a phone outside of the school day, weekends or school holidays. Issues arising from inappropriate phone usage outside the school day is **not** the responsibility of the school.
5. The school accepts no responsibility for any malfunction of a phone due to changes made to it while on the school network, or whilst resolving any connectivity issues.
6. The school is not responsible for the day-to-day maintenance or upkeep of the user's phone such as charging the installation of software or the resolution of hardware issues.
7. Parents/Guardians/Carers have full responsibility regarding the material their child has access to on their personal mobile phone/device and they should make their child aware of the legal implications regarding their usage. These issues are covered as part of the school's preventative curriculum however, ultimate responsibility for the use of the phone lies with the owner.
8. Under no circumstances are phones permitted to be used in certain areas within the school site e.g. changing rooms and toilets.
9. In the event of images being taken on the school premises without permission they must be deleted in the presence of senior staff before the phone is taken off the premises.
10. Students should not make any derogatory, defamatory, rude, threatening or inappropriate postings about the school or anyone (e.g. other students, staff, governors, visitors etc.) connected to the school.

11. Where students are using mobile phones within school to engage in bullying behaviours towards other students or to send offensive messages/calls, the school's Positive Behaviour Policy/ Addressing Bullying in Schools Policy will be applied.
12. If a teacher has any suspicion that a mobile phone has unsuitable material stored on it, students will be required to hand over the phone to a teacher and parents/guardians/carers will be asked to collect it from the school.
13. Mobile phones which are found in the school and whose owner cannot be located should be handed in at the School Office.
14. Where there is a suspicion that the material on the mobile phone may provide evidence relating to a criminal offence, the phone will be handed over to the PSNI for further investigation. Parents/Guardians/Carers will be informed in such circumstances. It should be noted that it is a criminal offence to use a mobile phone 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 necessary to involve the PSNI.
15. In accordance with the instructions issued by the examination's regulator JCQ  
***'Possession of a mobile phone or other unauthorised material is not allowed, even if you do not intend to use it. You will be subject to penalty and possible disqualification from the exam/qualification'.***

This guidance also applies to internal examinations in St Louis Grammar School.

Smart watches (such as Apple Watch or Garmin devices) may be worn in school as timekeepers, but active use of them, clearly associated with a link to a mobile phone, is not permitted.

If a pupil refuses to hand over their phone for confiscation, this will be treated as a failure to follow instructions, and the school Behaviour Policy will be applied as in all cases of defiance towards a member of staff.

### **Exceptional Circumstances**

If there is an exceptional circumstance such as a medical condition or Special Educational Need, a tailored approach will be adapted depending on the need of the student. e.g., a pupil with diabetes may need access to their phone to monitor glucose levels.

### **Sanction for students in Years 8 – 14**

The following sanction system will be used: Parents/Guardians/Carers will receive notification when a phone is confiscated.

- **First offence.** Phone is confiscated and dropped off at the School Office. Students can collect phones at 3.30pm and must sign for them.

- **Second offence.** Parents/Guardians/Carers will be expected to pick up the phone between 3.30pm and 4.30pm. The phone will only be returned to a parent/guardian/carer. The phone will be held securely until collected by a parent/guardian/carer.
- **Third offence.** Students will be interviewed by SLT (Mr Morgan)/Relevant Head of Year and parents/guardians/carers will be called to a meeting to discuss the issue formally and appropriate sanctions put in place.

Students who refuse to hand over a phone when asked to by a teacher will face disciplinary procedures in line with the school's broader Behaviour, Rewards and Sanctions Policy. This will be dealt with by a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

### **Actions by Teachers**

Teachers will follow the guidelines below:

- Where a student is seen using a mobile phone s/he will ask the student to turn off the phone and hand it over.
- The teacher will take the phone and escort the pupil to the School Office where the phone will be handed in to school office staff as soon as it is practical to do so. The school office staff will complete the necessary paperwork and contact parents/guardians/carers (unless it is a first offence).
- The teacher will sign the mobile phone register to confirm s/he has handed the named student's phone over.
- Teachers will not look at any content on the phone. Should the teacher have any safeguarding or child protection issues they should report this to the Designated Child Protection Teachers, Mrs McGreevy, Mrs O'Neill, Mrs Doherty, Mrs Toner and Miss Blacker.

### **Actions by Reception**

The office will maintain a spreadsheet of mobile phone violations. The spreadsheet will detail:

- Student name and class.
- Date that the phone was handed in.
- Visible state of the phone at the time it is handed in to the office.
- Number of times that a phone has been handed in. Repeated instances of confiscation will be considered and may lead to further disciplinary action.
- Phones will be labelled with the name of the student and class.
- Phones will be stored in a secure location.

### **Actions by Parents/Guardians/Carers**

Parents/Guardians/Carers are encouraged to enter a positive dialogue with their sons/daughters about how they use their mobile phones. Mobile phone use should be monitored at home, especially with younger students. This is particularly relevant where students have unfettered access to web content using mobile data and/or Wi-Fi. Please talk to your mobile phone provider to see what services they provide. More information is available from:

<https://saferinternet.org.uk/>

<https://smartphonefreechildhood.co.uk>

<https://www.internetmatters.org/setupsafe/>

<https://smartphonefreechildhood.co.uk/alternatives>

<https://support.apple.com/en-us/HT201304>

<https://support.google.com/googleplay/answer/1075738?hl=en-GB#zippy=%2Cfor-family-members-who-manage-their-own-accounts>

### **Use of Mobile Phones on School Trips/Outings:**

A phone free approach will also be adopted during school trips/outings. Times may be agreed when students can use their mobile phones for safety reasons/ to contact parents/guardians/carers to update them/arrange pickup times. This should be fully documented in School Trip Procedures/Risk Assessments.

### **Use of Mobile Phones by Teachers and Support Staff:**

Staff should use mobile phones in areas where students are present **only** when there is an emergency, or a pressing need to use the device. e.g. calling for a member of Senior Leadership Team to assist with a classroom incident. At other times, staff are expected to model the best practice expected of students. This means phones should not be visible nor should they be used. Staff can use mobile phones freely within the Staffroom area.

### **Communication of Policy**

Our Mobile Phone Policy will be available on the school website and on our school app.

### **Responsibility for Mobile Phones**

The school accepts no responsibility for theft, loss, damage, or health effects relating to mobile phones.

### **Monitoring and Review**

The school is committed to ensuring that this policy has a positive impact on student's education, behaviour, and welfare. When reviewing the policy, the school will consider relevant advice from the Department of Education, the local authority or other relevant organisations. This policy will be reviewed every two years.

## **APPENDIX 1**

1. For all mobile technologies on the school network, filtering will be applied to the internet connection and attempts to bypass this are not permitted.
2. Mobile phones may only be switched on and visible if requested by a teacher for learning and teaching purposes.
3. Mobile phones must be in sight during a lesson when used for learning and teaching.
4. If the internet is not required, mobile phones should be on aeroplane mode.
5. Cameras must be faced down on the table when in use unless directed otherwise by the teacher.
6. Camera and filming functions must not be used without prior consent of subjects (children and young people or staff) and special permission of school management.
7. Clear guidelines will be shared with pupils in advance highlighting that photos and videos taken for learning purposes should not be uploaded on social networking or other websites without the express permission of the subjects.
8. Consequences and sanctions for the misuse of mobile phones will be implemented in line with the school's positive behaviour and e-safety policies.
9. Misuse of a mobile phone while being used for learning and teaching will lead to confiscation.