



St. Mary's Secondary School Nenagh

Mobile Phone Policy

1. Purpose and Rationale

This policy sets out the school's approach to restricting the use of and access to personal mobile phones by students during the school day. The restriction addresses concerns including potential distraction during class time, risks of accessing inappropriate content, cyberbullying, and reduced social interaction with peers. The policy is also designed to prevent phones from interacting with related devices such as smartwatches, ear pods and other associated devices.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all students during the school day, including break times. The school day is defined as the period from arrival at the school premises until the end of the final scheduled class or activity. Senior cycle students, who are defined as students enrolled in Transition Year, 5th Year or 6th Year are permitted to access their phone during lunchtime if they are leaving the school premises for lunch. Lunchtime operates from 1.15pm to 2pm daily and senior students must not use their phone until they are outside of the school gates.

3. Restriction on Mobile Phone Use

Students must:

- Turn off their mobile phone on arrival to school
- Place their phone in the school-issued secure pouch
- Lock the pouch using the magnetic locking system
- Keep the pouch secured and phones inaccessible throughout the school day
- Only unlock pouches at the designated unlocking station at the end of the school day
- Other devices such as ear buds/ear phones must also be placed in the pouch. Smart watches do not have to be placed in the pouch.

Students may not:

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- Access their mobile phone during the school day unless granted an exemption by a member of staff
- Use their phone for calls, messaging, internet access, photography, or any other purpose during school hours
- Unlock pouches without staff authorisation
- Attempt to use an unlocking device without the prior authorisation of a staff member
- Unlock a pouch in any way other than by using the correct unlocking devices.

4. Pouches

The school uses secure locking pouches for mobile phone storage. Each student is issued with a personal pouch at the start of the school year or upon enrolment. Pouches are unlocked via a magnetic mechanism, which are mounted on walls around the school and portable unlocking devices are used for school trips. Pouches are labelled and students may only use the pouch that has the label assigned to them.

Students are solely responsible for the care of their issued pouch. Lost or damaged pouches will be subject to a replacement charge. This charge is set by the supplier, and parents will be provided with the invoice from the supplier confirming the charge. If the damage is found to be intentional this will be dealt with as intentional damage of school property.

Students will be required to return their pouch at the end of the school year, and the pouch remains the property of St. Mary's Secondary School.

If a student forgets their pouch on a particular day, they are required to hand their phone into the front office immediately when they arrive to school. It will be stored in the front office for the day.

5. Exemptions

Exemptions to the restriction on access to mobile phones may be granted on compassionate, fair, and transparent grounds for medical, wellbeing, special educational needs, or specific practical reasons.

Examples of circumstances where exemptions may apply include:

- Diabetes monitoring via blood glucose monitor and/or insulin delivery
- Blood pressure monitoring
- Seizure conditions requiring phone app monitoring
- Special educational needs (e.g., visual impairment, hearing impairment, speech and language support)

- English as an Additional Language (EAL) students requiring specific language support applications

Exemptions allow access to the phone for the specific reason only, not for general use.

Exemption Application Process

- Parents/guardians must submit a written application to the Principal outlining the specific need
- Applications should include supporting documentation (e.g., medical letter)
- The Principal, in consultation with relevant staff, will assess applications on a case-by-case basis
- Approved exemptions will be documented and reviewed annually or as circumstances change
- An appeal mechanism is available through the Board of Management

6. Communication

All communication during the school day between parents/guardians and the school must take place through our school office via the School App or the office phone (067-31450).

Students who sign out of school early, will do so in the usual way (via the School App) and sign out at the school office. Office staff will release their phone from the pouch when students are signing out.

7. Extra-Curricular and Off-Site Activities

The restriction applies throughout the school day, including during school-organised activities. Limited flexibility may be applied for activities taking place off school grounds where phone access is necessary for:

- Safeguarding purposes
- Facilitating parent/guardian collection where arrangements change
- Students leaving unexpectedly

After-school activities (e.g., after-school study, rehearsals) are also subject to this restriction, though agreed limitations may be applied by supervising teachers with the Principal's permission.

For school excursions and trips, students must have their phone switched off and secured in the pouch for the bus journey. Upon arrival at the destination, the accompanying teacher may, if deemed necessary, unlock the pouch using the portable unlocking device, to allow students to access to their phone. Phones must be switched off and secured in the pouch upon return to the bus.

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This allows students to focus on social interactions rather than devices for these trips. For school overnight trips, students must have their phone secured in the pouch from 10:00 pm until 8:00 am the following morning.

8. Use of Mobile Phones for Teaching and Learning

Where teachers determine that student use of personal mobile phones supports the provision of teaching and learning, or supports students with specific additional needs, students may be instructed to access their phones for the specific educational purpose and duration required.

8. Sanctions for Non-Compliance

Students who do not adhere to this policy will be subject to the school's Code of Behaviour. A breach will include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Not putting the phone in a pouch
- Opening a pouch without the prior authorisation of a staff member
- Making or receiving phone calls without permission
- Using a phone to send any sort of communication, including but not limited to email, use of any social media platform
- Using a phone to connect to another device, such as a smart watch
- Bringing a second phone to school. If a student brings a second phone to school, both phones will be confiscated.

The sanctions for a breach of this policy are as follows:

Non-compliance on the first occasion	Phone confiscated for the remainder of the day. Phone collected by student at the end of the school day.	Student issued with a lunchtime detention.
Non-compliance on the second occasion	Phone confiscated and must be collected by a parent/guardian.	Student will be issued with a one-day suspension and a meeting between the Year Head, Deputy Principal, the student and her parent(s)/guardians will be arranged.
Non-compliance on the third occasion	Phone confiscated and must be collected by a parent/guardian.	Student will be issued with a one-day suspension. The student will be required to meet, along with their parent(s)/guardian(s) with the Deputy Principal, Principal to discuss the ongoing issue.

Where a student breaches the policy more than three times, it will be deemed to be a very serious matter and will be escalated in line with the Code of Behaviour, considering the specific circumstances of any additional breach. Breaches are accumulated during the school year, i.e. between the first day of the first school term and the last day of the third school term.

9. Related Policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Bí Cineálta Policy (Anti-Bullying)
- Code of Behaviour
- Child Protection Policies and Procedures

10. Roles and Responsibilities

Students:

Students are expected to comply with the policy and care for issued pouches. It is the responsibility of each student to manage their pouch and ensure that their phone is in the pouch each day.

Parents/Guardians:

Parents/guardian are required to support the policy and to communicate necessary exemption requests. Parents/guardians are also requested to communicate with students during the school day by phoning the school office.

Staff:

Enforce the policy fairly and consistently, manage unlocking access points, and report breaches in line with the Code of Behaviour.

Principal:

The Principal is required to oversee the implementation of the policy and process exemption requests as they arise.

Board of Management:

The Board of Management is required to ensure that the policy is implemented, facilitate a bi-annual review and address any appeals to exemption requests.

11. Review

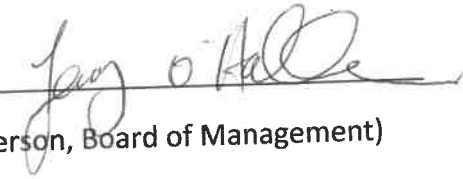
This policy will be reviewed bi-annually or as required to ensure continued alignment with Department of Education and Youth guidelines.

This policy was approved by the Board of Management.

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Date: 26th August 2026

Review date: August 2028

Signed: 
(Chairperson, Board of Management)

Signed: 
(Secretary, Board of Management)