

Polasaí guthán póca (daltaí/páistí) Mobile Phone/Related Technologies Policy (Pupils)



This policy follows recent recommendations by the Department of Education (Sept 2024) regarding the use of mobile phones in primary and secondary schools.

RATIONALE

Gaelscoil na bhFál accepts that some parents/guardians give their children mobile phones to protect them from everyday risks involving personal security and safety. There is also increasing concern about children travelling alone on public transport or commuting long distances to school. It is acknowledged that providing a child with a mobile phone gives parents reassurance that they can contact their child if they need to speak to them urgently.

Gaelscoil na bhFál therefore has established the following Acceptable Use Policy for Mobile Phones/Smart Phones and Related Technologies. The policy provides teachers, pupils, parents/guardians with guidelines and instructions for their appropriate use during school hours.

- Gaelscoil na bhFál **strongly discourages** pupils from bringing mobile phones to school.
- Children should not bring mobile phones to school unless the parent/guardian strongly believes in **EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES** that the child needs to have access to a phone at the need of school day.
- Parent/guardian need to have requested specific written permission from principal, vice-principal to have phone on school premises
- Parents and children will sign a contract
- The school takes no responsibility for damage/loss to mobile phones. Mobile phones are brought to school entirely at the owner's risk. The school accepts no responsibility for replacing lost, stolen, or damaged mobile phones.
- If permission is granted to a pupil to have a phone in school, the phone **MUST** be left in the school office, in a designated drawer at the owner's risk.
- Again, the school cannot take responsibility for damaged/lost phones as per the contract.
- If pupils bring mobile phones to school, the phones must remain **switched off** and left in the school office. Pupils are not permitted to use the phone on school grounds e.g - arriving/leaving!
- Should parents need to contact pupils during the school day, or vice versa, this should be done following the normal school procedures: via the school office.
- Where a pupil is found by a member of staff to be using a mobile phone during the school day, the phone may be taken from the pupil and handed

over to a member of the school's Senior Leadership Team (SLT). The mobile phone will be stored in the school office until the end of the school day. The pupil may collect the phone at the end of the school day and the child's parent/guardian will be contacted. If this happens repeatedly, blatant disregard for school rules, this could lead to suspension

- Phones must **NEVER** be used to photograph other children within the school. There are children in school whose parents have opted for 'no photographs' in the consent forms.
- If a pupil uses a mobile phone inappropriately (eg. Phone calls on school premises, to send inappropriate texts or to take inappropriate photographs/video footage of either other pupils or teachers), this will be regarded as a serious offence, and the principal will decide on appropriate disciplinary action in line with the school's Positive Behaviour Policy and Safeguarding Policy.
- If a pupil repeatedly misuses their mobile phone on school premises, the school will review the arrangement between pupil and his/her family regarding permission to have mobile phone on school premises and/or sanctions may apply.
- It should be noted that it is a **criminal offence** to use a mobile phone to menace, harass, or offend another person. The principal or a member of the school's SLT may consider it appropriate to refer any such matter to appropriate authorities/ PSNI.
- If images (photographic or video) of other pupils or teachers have been taken, the phone will not be returned to the pupil until the pupil, in the presence of a member of the SLT or the child's parent/guardian, has removed the images. A member of the school's SLT will always contact a parent/guardian before asking a child to delete material from their mobile phone.
- A member of the school's SLT will contact parents/guardians in all cases where inappropriate photographs/video/audio footage has been found.

RELATED TECHNOLOGY

- The procedures applying to the inappropriate use of mobile phones apply equally to the inappropriate use of related technologies, smart watches, with similar capabilities, e.g., messaging, recording (audio & video), photography, etc.

CONCLUSION

- This policy will be reviewed in the summer term of the academic year 2025/26 or amended before this timescale in line with appropriate guidance/legislation from the Dept of Education.