



St. Patrick's College
Lacken Cross, Killala - Co. Mayo

MOBILE PHONE POLICY

St Patrick's College
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Killala
Co Mayo

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1. 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.

St. Patrick's College recognises that mobile phones and personal smart devices are now an integral part of young people's lives and that they can have considerable value when used appropriately.

However, in a school setting, mobile phones and personal smart devices can prevent effective teaching and learning from taking place and inhibit the social development of students.

Additionally, instances of inappropriate photographing/videoing of members of the school community and inappropriate communications via social media apps can heighten anxiety and stress levels amongst students and in some severe cases this can lead to incidents of bullying. This policy aims to protect the whole school community from these possibilities.

2. Rationale

This policy aims to protect and support the welfare, wellbeing, and safety of all within our school community. This policy is intended to support schools in:

1. Improving the learning environment in schools by reducing screentime distraction.
2. Reducing the risk of cyberbullying and access to inappropriate content during school hours.
3. Increase traditional social interactions between students at school break times.
4. Comply with the Department of Education and Youth Circular 0045/2025.

As stated in Circular 0045/2025, schools are required to implement a policy aimed at restricting the use of, and access to, personal mobile phones by students for the duration of the school day, including during breaks and at lunchtimes.

The policy to restrict the use of phones by students during the school day outside of limited exceptions (please see below) will enable the school to provide a phone-free environment, support students' wellbeing, concentration levels, academic performance and personal growth.

The implementation of this policy will provide a space for students to disconnect from their online world and can assist in supporting them to become less dependent on their mobile phones. St Patrick's College recognises that mobile phones play an integral part in young people's lives.

The school also recognises that mobile phones can have considerable benefits and value when used appropriately. However, we are also cognisant that mobile phones can serve as a major distraction and obstacle to effective engagement in learning, can hinder

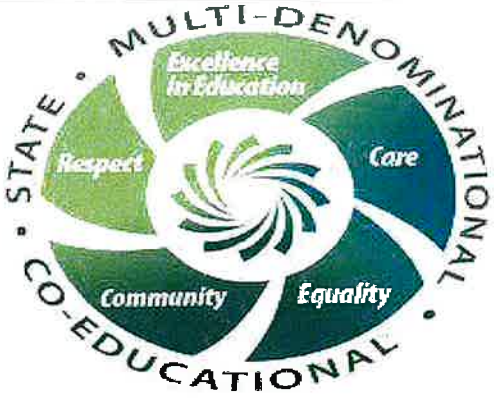
communication and socialisation, and can contribute to high levels of anxiety and stress among young people and adults.

The following issues have been identified with mobile phone usage in Secondary Schools

1. Research shows that screen time can impact short-term understanding and long-term retention of information. Students with less phone contact generally perform better academically.
2. Less screen time reduces risk of screen addiction and improves concentration levels. Students are better able to engage in critical thinking and problem-solving which are key skills needed for building their resilience.
3. Cyberbullying, harassment, and the sharing of harmful content, hurtful messages and personal misinformation are all issues arising from increased exposure to mobile devices.
4. Social exclusion and the need for students to conform to a certain online persona can compound both anxiety and feelings of peer pressure. This can result in loneliness and have negative impacts on mental health and wellbeing. Conversely, less screen time enhances social interaction between students which in turn can allow for relationship- building and reduced anxiety. The opportunity to develop social skills and of learning how to communicate effectively (eye contact) are also enhanced by less screen time.
5. Phone misuse/overuse can lead to disrupted sleep patterns, leading to fatigue, reduced attention capacity, low mood and poorer academic performance.
6. Academic integrity and assessment fairness are becoming increasingly compromised, leading to distortions in appraising student academic ability.
7. The smooth running of the school office can also be interrupted by students using their phone inappropriately. Phone calls home by students can sometimes create confusion at the front office when student's parents and guardians arrive for unexpected reasons.

In order to ensure a healthy, engaging and safe environment for all members of our school community, St Patrick's College will be a mobile phone/personal smart device free zone during the school day including at break and lunch times. This includes smart phones/watches, ear/air pods, personal tablets or any personal communication device.

As an ETB school, the ETBI Patrons' Framework on Ethos underpins all policies and practices in St Patrick's College. It informs the values promoted in our school, how the formal and hidden curricula are delivered, and the nature of the relationships within our school. As such, St Patrick's College is committed to and underpinned by the core values of:

•Excellent in Education •Care •Respect •Equality •Community	
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In particular, this policy is informed by the core values of excellence in education, care and respect, where the welfare, wellbeing and safety of the entire school community must be respected and cared for in order to create an environment that is supportive of excellent teaching and learning.

3. Links to Other Policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies and legislation.

- Code of Behaviour
- Bí-Cinnealta Anti-Bullying Policy
- Acceptable Internet Use Policy (A.U.P.)
- Education Act, 1998
- Education (Welfare) Act, 2000

4. Aims of the Policy

The aims of this policy are to:

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

5. Pouches

For the 2026/2027 academic year, St Patrick's College will be a mobile phone/personal smart device free zone during the school day. This includes smart phones/watches, ear pods and personal tablets etc.

To assist in the implementation of our mobile phone policy, the college 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.

The responsibility to look after the pouch carefully, use it for the safe and secure storage of their phone and return the pouch 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 their time at St Patrick's College.

6. Daily Procedure

- On entering the school campus, students will be required to turn their phone off and place it in their pouch where it will remain locked until the end of the school day.
- Phones may not remain connected to any other smart devices such as smart watches, ear pods, headphones or smart glasses.
- Regular checks and inspections will be undertaken during the school day, and 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 in the school.
- Year Heads and Senior Management will regularly check pouches during the school day.

7. Pouch Ownership

Pouches are given on loan to students free of charge but remain the property of the college. Any loss of or damage to the phone pouch will incur a charge of €25 to the parents/guardians to provide for a replacement pouch.

8. Medical Issues and Exemptions

For students requiring regular access to their mobile phone for medical reasons, an adapted phone pouch is available upon receipt of a doctor or consultant's letter detailing the reason for the required access.

Exemptions will only apply on medical grounds and will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Parents/Guardians should contact the school in advance to make them aware of the medical condition that requires their child to access their mobile phone. Examples of some of the possible conditions may include:

1. Diabetes blood glucose monitoring and/or insulin delivery mechanism.
2. Blood pressure monitoring.
3. Seizure conditions where monitoring via a mobile phone app is needed.
4. Additional/special educational needs, for specific tasks relating to a student's visual impairment, hearing impairment, speech and language impairments.
5. Periodic access by an English as an Additional Language (EAL) student to specific applications to support language development. This will be determined by the EAL teacher on a lesson-by-lesson basis.

Please note that students under these circumstances will also be required to use a phone pouch but it will be a Velcro pouch allowing for immediate access if/when required.

School staff will be notified of any student possessing an adapted phone pouch.

9. Students who do not bring a Phone to School

In the event that a student does not have parental permission to bring their phone to school, the parent/guardian must inform the Principal /Deputy Principal in writing of this fact.

(See Appendix 1)

Students who are over 18 years of age and who do not wish to bring their mobile phone to school must provide this information in writing to the Principal/Deputy Principal.

(See Appendix 2)

10. Arriving Late or Early Departure

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

11. School Assessments and State Examinations

As per the State/school examinations rules, no mobile phones/personal smart devices are allowed in an examination centre.

Mobile phones should be left in pouches during house examinations and assessments.

12. Damaged or Lost Pouches

The mobile phone pouch is the property of the school. Any loss or damage to the pouch will result in the student being required to purchase a new one for €25. 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 their Year Head 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.

It is the student's responsibility to keep their pouch containing their phone in a safe and secure location. St Patrick's College accept no responsibility for lost, stolen or damaged mobile phones and personal smart devices such as smart watches and ear pods.

13. Forgotten Pouches

Students will not be permitted to attend class without their mobile phone pouch. If a student forgets their phone pouch, their phone must be handed into the office for the day. It can be collected at the end of the day.

Repeated instances will require the purchase of a new pouch.

14. Parental Contact

All communication during the school day between parents/guardians and the school must take place through our school office via the Tyro app, email (info@lackencross.ie) or the office phone (096 34177).

Students are free to call their parents from the front office at any time.

Students who wish to sign out of school early, will do so in the usual fashion (via the Tyro app) and must be collected by parents/guardians at the school reception desk. Office staff will release their phone from the pouch when students are signing out.

15. After school Activities/trips/tours

For school excursions and trips, students should have their phone secured in the phone pouch for the bus journey. Upon arrival at the destination, the accompanying teacher may unlock the phone pouch using the portable unlocking device, to allow students to access their phone for a set period of time. Phones must be secured in the phone pouch upon return to the bus.

Phones may be unlocked for the following reasons;

1. For health and safety purposes.
2. For payment purposes if a group stops at a shop etc.
3. To contact parents/guardians to arrange pick up spots and times.
4. On trips and tours where students have time for sightseeing, shopping etc. and may need their phone to contact teachers' or staff members who are supervising the trip /tour or other students in their group.

If a student is using their mobile phone while on a school tour/activity, they must do so in an appropriate and responsible manner. Students should be mindful of other students/staff/members of the public when taking photos/videos and always respect the privacy rights of others.

Pouches can also be released during designated lessons where appropriate. Examples include photographing project work (list) or the use of educational apps. The use of mobile phones is however, strictly prohibited in dressing rooms or changing rooms. Misuse of phones during such classes shall be treated as a breach of the school's Code of Behaviour.

16. Sanctions

In the event that a student does not have their phone in a pouch without expressed permission of the school Principal during the school day, the following rules will apply.

First offence - If a student is found in possession of a phone outside a pouch during the school day, the phone will be confiscated and can be collected from the front office after the end of the school day.

The student will also be required to hand his phone in to the Deputy Principal's office for the following three days.

Second offence – If a student is found in possession of a phone outside a pouch during the school day, as outlined above, the phone will be confiscated and can be collected from the Deputy Principal's after the end of the school day.

However, this time, the student will receive a two-day suspension for the following two school days.

Repeat offences – The Senior Management of the school will consider more severe sanctions (up to and including further graded suspensions) and a plan moving forward which will be communicated in a meeting to parents/guardians.

17. Further Points of Note

- All communication during the school day between parents/guardians and the school must be made through our school office or via the TYRO App. If a parent/guardian needs to make urgent contact with their child, a call should be placed with the reception office, and a message will be passed to the student with immediate effect.
- It is the student's responsibility to keep their pouch containing their phone in a safe and secure location (e.g. in their schoolbag or in their locker). St Patrick's College accepts no responsibility for lost, stolen or damaged mobile phones and personal smart devices such as smart watches and air/ear pods.
- Any student found with a 'fake/dummy' phone, or any other device imitating their phone, in their pouch is in breach of this policy and this will be dealt with following the same graded steps as outlined in the sanctions section outlined above.
- Refusal to allow confiscation of the device will be treated as a serious breach of the Code of Behaviour. The student will be sent immediately to the Principal/Deputy Principal's office at such time the student's parent/guardian will be contacted to collect the phone, and the student will also be suspended for the following school day.
- If a student brings a second mobile phone to school, in addition to the phone placed in their phone pouch (or in place of a confiscated mobile phone), both phones will be confiscated. Thereafter, the student will be suspended from school.
- Any student who forgets to unlock their mobile phone pouch at the end of the school day can either return to the school to unlock the pouch or enjoy a phone free evening.

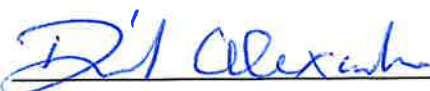
18. Further Supports and Resources

Webwise - the Irish Internet Safety Awareness Centre - provides free information and resources for schools, families and young people on online safety and digital citizenship.

www.webwise.ie

- Webwise also provides tools to parents to support their engagement in their children's online lives. www.webwise.ie
- Webwise Youth Advisory Panel provides resources and training programmes that promote digital citizenship and addresses topics such as online well-being and cyberbullying.

- NEPS (National Educational Psychological Services) – has developed a range of wellbeing information and supports for schools, students and parents/guardians which are available on www.gov.ie
- The Department of Education, along with its support services and the HSE, also have a range of documents and resources to assist in the promotion of wellbeing across school communities, also available on www.gov.ie

Signed: 

Chairperson of Board of Management

Date: 22/10/26

Signed: 

Secretary of Board of Management

Date: 22/10/26

Appendix 1



St. Patrick's College
Lacken Cross, Killala - Co. Mayo

PHONE POLICY

Parental Notification

I wish to confirm that my child does not have parental permission to bring their phone to school and therefore does not need a phone pouch.

I have read and understand the mobile phone policy

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Signed: _____

Date: _____

Parent/Guardian

Appendix 2



St. Patrick's College
Lacken Cross, Killala - Co. Mayo

PHONE POLICY

Over 18's

I wish to confirm that I am over 18 and do not wish to bring my mobile phone to school. I therefore do not need a phone pouch.

I have read and understand the mobile phone policy

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Signed: _____

Date: _____

Student

Appendix 3

Personal Mobile Phone Usage

Guidelines for Staff

1. Teachers should keep personal mobile phones on silent or turned off during class time and avoid using them for personal reasons or professional communication in front of pupils.
2. The appropriate place to take a call/make a call/text etc. is the teacher staffroom. If you are expecting an important personal phone call, please arrange for this call to happen during a free class or a break.
3. In the case of an emergency, please send a student to get a member of senior management.
4. Personal mobile phones should be stored away (in a pocket, bag, or drawer) while supervising or teaching children at all times.
5. Please use your lap top computer to take school rolls on TYRO.
6. Never use a personal phone to text, call, or email students or their parents. Always rely on official school communication channels.
7. If using your personal phone to take photographs while on trips away or at sporting events, please make sure to upload onto the school one drive and delete from your personal device.
8. Never bring mobile phones into sensitive zones like changing rooms or toilets.

Teachers should model good mobile phone behaviour by keeping their own devices out of sight during instructional time and explaining transparently when and why they use a phone for learning tasks.

There are three office phones that staff can use at any time during the school day.