



**Coláiste Pobail Acla**

## **Mobile Phone and Digital Devices Policy**

**Coláiste Pobail Acla,  
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## 1. Background

This policy was originally drawn up in response to technological advances, which have seen a significant increase in mobile phone usage and other digital devices amongst the school population in recent years. Considering the Minister for Education's August 2024 directive (Appendix 1) regarding the responsible use of mobile devices in schools, Coláiste Pobail Acla has amended this policy to adhere to national guidelines and recommendations.

*This policy approach is based on the growing concerns expressed about the impact of the use of mobile phones during the school day, including the potential for distraction during class time, the risk of accessing inappropriate content and cyberbullying, and the potential for decreased social interaction with peers.*

*(Extract from the Minister's Letter, 28<sup>th</sup> August 2024)*

### 1.1. Rationale

The use of mobile phones and digital devices, particularly with the advent of increasingly sophisticated technology, may present some challenges in our school and needs to be carefully managed by school procedures in order to create and maintain a safe school environment.

- Mobile phones and other digital devices can be intrusive and distracting in a school environment. This policy refers to both mobile phones and all other digital devices that can be used as recording and/or communication devices.
- The use of such equipment poses a threat to our ability to ensure our students are cared for in a safe and protected environment.
- Such equipment could potentially be used to harass or bully other members of the school community.
- Such equipment could potentially be used to take or transmit inappropriate/unlawful images.
- Phones and other digital devices could potentially be used to access inappropriate material.

We at Coláiste Pobail Acla are aware that some parents/guardians may feel the need for their children to carry mobile phones or digital devices for personal safety and protection while travelling to and from school.

**IMPORTANT:** In this regard, mobile phones and other digital devices are not banned by the school. However, *their use in the school building, on the school grounds or while on school activities is banned.*

*Mobile phones must be powered off during the school day and kept out of sight. This includes smartwatches and earbuds, which must not be connected to a powered-up mobile device.*

### 1.2. Link with the School's Mission Statement

Coláiste Pobail Acla aims to maintain a supportive school environment that is safe and secure for all school community members as set out in the school Mission Statement.

## 2. Procedures

### 2.1. On School Grounds

The school recommends that phones and other digital devices are not brought to school unless they are required before/after school.

The school will accept no responsibility for replacing mobile phones that are lost, stolen or damaged.

A parent/guardian who feels their child needs a phone while travelling to and from school must adhere to the procedures outlined in this policy. On entering the school grounds, mobile phones must be turned off and put 'out of sight'.

**Students are not allowed to use mobile phones or other digital devices while on the school premises.** This includes the use of such equipment for phoning, messaging, filming, recording audio, taking photographs, instant messaging, playing music, checking the time/date, using alarms. This list is not exhaustive; in short, no usage of such devices is permitted. If they are seen in our school or on our grounds it is deemed to be a breach of this policy.

### 2.2. In Class

These devices must not be used or 'in sight' at any other time, as outlined in this policy. If a device is required by a student, it may be arranged by the class teacher.

### 2.3. Out of School Activities

Students travelling away from school on an organised school activity **may** be permitted to use their phone in certain circumstances. On such occasions, where a teacher is permitting phone usage, students and parents/guardians will be made aware of it in advance of travelling. Unless this notification is received, parents/guardians and students must adhere to the usual phone and digital devices policy as outlined in this document.

Misuse of mobile phones during these activities will be treated as a violation of the policy and will result in disciplinary measures.

### 2.4. Student Contact with Home

If a student needs to contact home during the day, this contact **must** be made through the school office using the school phone.

**It is unacceptable for students to contact home using a device that is banned from use on our premises.**

Likewise, parents/guardians who need to contact their children during the school day are welcome to do so by ringing the school at 098-45139. It is important that the ban on mobile phone usage is supported by our whole school community including parents/guardians.

### 2.5. Breaches of the Mobile Phone & Digital Device Policy

If a student is found to be in breach of this policy, they will be asked to report immediately to the school's main reception area. They will be required to turn off the device, failure to do so will result in an escalation of sanctions under our Code of Behaviour.

Any student in breach of this policy will receive -10 points on VSware and an automatic suspension:

- for the remainder of the academic day of the offence, and
- for the subsequent academic day.

If a device or noise from a device disrupts a class, the same procedure and suspension will apply.

## 2.6. Online Content

Any inappropriate online content that refers to Coláiste Pobail Acla, its staff, or its students will be reported to An Garda Síochána for further investigation.

## 3. Responsibility

It is the responsibility of Students, Staff and Parents/Guardians to adhere to this policy.

## 4. Evaluation

This policy is monitored on an ongoing basis and amendments added as new technology develops and becomes accessible.

## 5. Related Linked School Policies

- Code of Behaviour
- ICT and Acceptable Use
- Out of School Activities

## 6. Declaration

This Coláiste Pobail Acla Policy was formed following consultation with all staff, members of the Board of Management, Parents and the Student Council. It is recommended that this policy be reviewed every three years or whenever it is deemed necessary by School Management. The Board of Management of Coláiste Pobail Acla adopted it on:

Signed: Martin O'Reilly

Date: 17/12/24

Print Name: MARTIN O'REILLY

Chairperson of the Board of Management

Signed: Mr. Jason Ó Mongáin

Date: 17-Dec-24.

Mr. Jason Ó Mongáin

Board Secretary & School Principal

## 7. Appendix 1 – Letter from the Minister for Education Regarding Phones

An Roinn Oideachais  
Department of Education



28<sup>th</sup> August 2024.

Dear Principal and Chair of the Board of Management,

I write to express my gratitude to you and your staff and the entire school community for the work you are doing and also to wish you every success in the year ahead.

As you will be aware, I recently announced my intention to instruct schools to implement a ban on the use of mobile phones during the school day, both in primary and post-primary schools.

This policy approach is based on the growing concerns expressed about the impact of the use of mobile phones during the school day, including the potential for distraction during class time, the risk of accessing inappropriate content and cyberbullying, and the potential for decreased social interaction with peers.

It is recognised that many schools already have well-developed and managed policies in place in this area currently and this initiative will build on that foundation. I commend schools for the time and attention given to this in recent years. In some schools, there will be no material change, whereas for other schools this ban provides a supportive framework to enable them to implement more stringent policies.

This initiative will build on the “Keeping Childhood Smartphone Free” policy which is aimed at children in primary school. There has already been a strong take-up of the voluntary agreements among parents not to buy smartphones for their children while they are in primary school. The “Keeping Childhood Smartphone Free” policy has also been supported by all of Ireland’s leading mobile phone network operators.

Schools are best placed to determine the specific approach and policy required to achieve a school day that is free from mobile phone use by students. I am asking that schools consult with their students and parents in developing the approach that is best suited to their own circumstances. This may include consideration of the use of lockers, cubbies, or allowing phones to be stored in the students’ bags switched off during the school day or whatever the school may deem appropriate.

The policy ultimately developed should advise that parents and guardians can continue to contact or leave messages for their children through the school office in the usual manner for specific circumstances such as family emergencies or medical appointments. Parents and guardians can also permit their children to carry and access their phones during travel to and from school.

The policy should provide for those who need access to their mobile phone for specific reasons and in accordance with existing policy, for example, students with diabetes might use continuous glucose monitoring with a sensor linked to their mobile phone to monitor blood sugar levels.

It is important to note that the use of tablets, computers and laptops will still be supported and indeed encouraged, provided they are used under the direct guidance

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Minister for Education

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of a staff member in the context of teaching and learning and in line with the school's Acceptable Use Policy and Digital Learning Plan.

Webwise, the Irish Internet Safety Awareness Centre funded by the Department of Education and co-funded by the European Commission will continue to provide supports to schools to help educate students about online safety, including:

- Acceptable Use policy information, including an Acceptable Use Policy Generator which is free for all schools to use. The easy to use tool allows schools to customise an Acceptable Use Policy based on your school needs.
- Advice for teachers including classroom videos, a parent's hub including app explainers, and a youth hub including information videos.

A suite of professional learning resources will also be made available to schools to support them in their work to prevent and address bullying behaviour.

Further guidance will issue in due course to support school communities in implementing this new policy during the 2024/2025 school year.

The conversation that has been started about the use of mobile phones in schools will also, I hope, stimulate national discourse that will support parents to examine related matters with their children and to agree an approach that is appropriate for their unique family and home circumstances.

With gratitude and good wishes for the school year ahead,



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Norma Foley TD  
Minister for Education