



BELIEVING
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MOBILE TELEPHONE AND ELECTRONIC DEVICES POLICY

September 2021

**BELFAST
ROYAL
ACADEMY**

Title	Mobile Telephone and Electronic Devices Policy
Summary	Guidance for all stakeholders regarding: The use of mobile telephones and other electronic devices during the School day.
Purpose	To ensure that all pupils, parents and staff are aware of the regulations for the use of mobile telephones and electronic devices.
Operational Date	September 2021
Next Review Date	June 2022
Author	Vice Principal (Pastoral)

To be posted on School website	Yes
Date and version posted (if applicable)	October 2021

Mobile phones are now a feature of modern society. This technology presents a number of challenges, including:

- Mobile phones interrupting lessons and disrupting the learning of others;
- Damage caused to mobile phones if dropped;
- Increasing the daily screen time that many pupils have which impacts on mental health, developing healthy relationships with others and participating in extra-curricular activities;
- Requirements from public examination boards regarding mobile phones in examination rooms;
- The ever-increasing sophistication of mobile phone technology, which increases the possibilities of inappropriate use, particularly with regard to video and photographic capabilities;
- The potential to use the mobile phone e.g. for texting whilst on silent mode or using the internet to access social media and/or inappropriate applications.
- The need for pupils to be responsible with regard to the care of their possessions;
- The negative impact of social media and cyberbullying.

The School recognises the benefits that phones offer pupils and parents and realises that an outright ban would result in a loss of these benefits. However, it is the School's responsibility to promote the safe and responsible use of mobile phones during the school day. Whilst the School would prefer pupils not to have mobile phones on their possession and would rather pupils would use the existing facilities on the site, we realise that this cannot cover the period when pupils are travelling to and from school. It is against the above background that the following policy is to be adopted.

Mobile phones are a part of modern society and the School accepts that many pupils will possess them. They are a useful tool, especially where the issue of safety during the journey to and from School is concerned and the School acknowledges that parents and pupils would want them to be available to achieve this.

However, teachers and pupils have a right to teach and learn in a school environment which is free from interruption by mobile phones and other such devices.

School Policy

The policy applies to registered pupils of the School, and also includes those pupils involved in Shared Education.

- Pupils are discouraged from bringing mobile phones or smart watches to school.
- Pupils are reminded that they should go to the General Office if they need to contact their parents.
- Parents are reminded that only **URGENT** messages may be transmitted via the General Office during school hours.
- Any cancellation of after-school activities will be communicated to parents via the School's Communication System.

If parents choose to permit their son/daughter to bring a mobile phone to school, the following rules apply:

- The school accepts no responsibility for mobile phones and undertakes no responsibility to investigate misplacement, loss or theft.
- Mobile phones should be “**switched off and out of sight**” at all times. Any phone seen or heard will be retained; this includes phones on display in blazer or shirt pockets.
- Mobile phones **may not be used at any time on school premises** no matter what time a pupil arrives into school.
- Pupils may not use their mobile phones to listen to music at any time across the school sites, including Roughfort and the Castle Grounds.
- Pupils may not use their mobile phones on the school buses to and from sports venues or on school trips that occur during the school day.
- Parents needing to contact pupils can do so, either by calling the General Office with **URGENT** messages or by sending a text message to their son/daughter which can be checked after they have left the school site.
- Mobile phones and accessories (including wearables such as smart watches, Fitbits and other monitoring equipment) must be switched off and out of sight at all times. If a phone rings, or is seen by a member of staff, or if use is made of the phone, it will be retained.
- Any member of staff can confiscate a phone. This includes all support staff and temporary teaching staff.
- If a phone is retained, it will be left with the Principal. Parents will be contacted by the Principal’s secretary to inform them of the confiscation and arrangements will be made for either a parent or other responsible adult to collect the item the next working day. Under no circumstances will a phone be returned directly to the pupil.
- If a phone is retained for a second time within the school year, it will only be returned to the parent after one week has elapsed.
- If a phone is retained for a third time within the school year, it will only be returned to the parent after four weeks has elapsed.
- If a phone is retained for more than three times within a school year, it will be dealt with in accordance with the Action Plan for Positive Behaviour, as outlined in the Positive Behaviour Policy.
- ***The only exemption to this is when the pupil has been given special permission to keep their phone with them for specific health-related reasons as detailed in their PLP.***
- Phones may not be used in class for any reason including listening to music when completing work, taking photographs of work on the board, accessing Google Classroom or to use the calculator function.

Forms L6 and M6

It is recognised that Sixth Form pupils should have some privileges regarding the use of phones in school, so it is essential that they model the responsible use of such devices to their younger peers. The following represents the behaviours expected of Sixth Form pupils:

- Lower Sixth pupils are only permitted to use their mobile phones in the Lower Sixth common room.
- Middle Sixth pupils are only permitted to use their mobile phones in the Middle Sixth common room.
- Sixth Form pupils should not walk around the school site using phones between lessons and at break and lunch in view of the younger pupils.
- Outside of the respective common rooms, phones should be switched off and out of sight. This includes phones on display in blazer or shirt pockets.

School Examinations

- The Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) requires all examination centres to reinforce the rules and regulations about unauthorised items during external examinations. Potential technological / web-enabled sources of information such as mobile phones, iPods, MP3/4 players, fitness trackers or watches are not permitted in the examination room. If a pupil is found to be in possession of any unauthorised item after the start of the examination, the device will be retained and a full report will be submitted to the examination board, who will take the necessary action in accordance with the JCQ Rules and Regulations on Malpractice. This may result in a disqualification.
- As a result of the JCQ Guidance, pupils who are sitting any school examinations are not permitted to be in possession of a watch or any other potential technological / web-enabled sources of information such as mobile phones, iPods, MP3/4 players, fitness trackers or similar devices. If such a device sounds during an internal examination, even if no obvious advantage is gained, the pupil will lose their marks for the paper.

Electronic Devices

- Pupils should not bring any mobile electronic devices into school such as handheld games consoles or tablet devices such as an iPad unless this has been specified in a pupil's Personal Learning Plan (PLP).

Emergencies

- If a pupil needs to contact his/her parents/guardians he/she will be allowed to use a school telephone which is available at the General Office. If parents need to contact children urgently they should phone the General Office and a message will be relayed promptly.

Responsibility for mobile phones

- The School accepts no responsibility for theft, loss, damage or health effects relating to mobile telephones or other electronic devices. It is the responsibility of parents and pupils to ensure mobile telephones are properly insured.