Mobile Phone and Electronic Devices Policy

School Address*: Our Lady of Good Counsel School,*

Innishmore, Ballincollig, Cork. P31FH22

Phone number: *0214878370*

Roll number: *18208A*

School Patron: *The Bishop of Cork and Ross, Bishop Fintan Gavin*.

Principal: *Aisling Power*.

Deputy Principal: *Nollaig Moynihan.*

Chairperson: *Harold Brooks*

Introduction

This policy has been developed in recognition of the increasing use of mobile phones, tablets, smart devices, and other electronic technologies by children and young people. In a special school setting, digital technology can provide valuable educational, communication, independence, and therapeutic supports. However, inappropriate or unsupervised use of electronic devices may present risks to learning, privacy, wellbeing, and safeguarding.

This policy aims to ensure that electronic devices are used safely, responsibly, and appropriately within the school environment.

Rationale

This policy is necessary because:

- Mobile phones and personal electronic devices can be distracting and disruptive to teaching, learning, and social interaction.

- Technology must be managed appropriately to maximise educational and communication benefits while minimising potential risks.
- Electronic devices may be used inappropriately to access unsuitable content, communicate unsafely, or record images, videos, or audio without consent.
- Many pupils use tablets or electronic devices as Assistive Technology (AT) or Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) systems and therefore require access to these devices throughout the school day.
- The school has a duty to safeguard pupils and protect their privacy and dignity.

Relationship to School Ethos

OLGC School is committed to providing a safe, respectful, inclusive, and supportive learning environment where every pupil can achieve their full potential.

The school recognises that electronic devices can:

- Support communication and language development.
- Promote independence and self-advocacy.
- Enhance access to the curriculum.
- Develop digital literacy and life skills.

At the same time, the school seeks to ensure that technology is used in a manner that respects the rights, safety, wellbeing, and dignity of all members of the school community.

Aims

This policy aims to:

- Promote the safe and responsible use of mobile phones and electronic devices.
- Minimise distractions to teaching and learning.
- Protect pupils' privacy and wellbeing.
- Develop pupils' digital citizenship and online safety skills.
- Support the effective use of assistive and educational technologies.
- Ensure compliance with safeguarding and data protection requirements.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- Pupils
- Staff
- Parents/Guardians
- Visitors while on school premises or participating in school activities

The policy covers:

- Mobile phones
- Tablets and iPads
- Smart watches
- Electronic gaming devices
- Cameras and recording devices
- AAC devices and communication technology
- Any future electronic technologies brought into school

Use of Mobile Phones by Pupils

During School Hours

- Pupils are not permitted to use personal mobile phones during the school day unless specifically authorised by school staff for educational or therapeutic purposes.
- Where a pupil requires a phone for travel arrangements before or after school, the device should remain switched off and stored securely.
- Pupils may be asked to hand their phones to a designated member of staff for safekeeping during the school day.

Exceptions

Exceptions may be made where:

- A mobile phone forms part of a pupil's Individual Education Plan (IEP) or transition programme.
- The device is required to support communication, independence, safety, travel training, or life-skills development.
- Specific permission has been granted by the Principal or designated staff member.

Educational and Communication Devices

The school recognises the importance of tablets and electronic devices used for:

- AAC and communication systems.
- Literacy and numeracy programmes.
- Assistive technology supports.

- Access to learning resources.
- Therapeutic and sensory regulation activities.

These devices may be used during the school day under staff supervision and in accordance with individual pupil programmes.

Photography, Audio and Video Recording

To protect the privacy and dignity of all pupils:

- Pupils must not photograph, video, or record other pupils, staff, or visitors without permission.
- Images or recordings taken without consent may be deleted.
- The sharing of photographs, videos, or recordings through social media, messaging apps, or other online platforms is strictly prohibited.
- Any concerns relating to inappropriate recordings will be managed in accordance with the school's Code of Behaviour and Safeguarding Procedures.

Online Safety

The school actively promotes safe and responsible use of technology.

Pupils will receive age-appropriate and ability-appropriate education regarding:

- Online safety.
- Digital citizenship.
- Responsible communication.
- Privacy and personal information.
- Safe use of social media.
- Cyberbullying awareness.

Staff will support pupils in developing safe technology habits relevant to their individual level of understanding.

Loss, Damage or Theft

- Pupils bring personal electronic devices to school at their own risk.
- The school cannot accept responsibility for the loss, theft, or damage of personal devices.
- Reasonable efforts will be made to store devices securely where required.

Misuse of Electronic Devices

Examples of misuse include:

- Accessing inappropriate content.
- Taking photographs or recordings without permission.
- Cyberbullying or online harassment.
- Using devices in a manner that disrupts learning.
- Sharing confidential or personal information.
- Using a device during instructional time without permission.

Consequences for misuse may include:

- Temporary confiscation of the device.
- Parental notification.
- Loss of device privileges.
- Behavioural supports or interventions.
- Referral to school management where appropriate.

Serious incidents will be managed in line with the school's Code of Behaviour, Anti-Bullying Policy, Child Safeguarding Statement, and relevant legislation.

Roles and Responsibilities

Principal

- Oversees implementation of the policy.
- Ensures policy review and compliance.

Staff

- Monitor and supervise appropriate device use.
- Teach safe and responsible use of technology.
- Report concerns relating to misuse or safeguarding.

Parents/Guardians

- Support the school's expectations regarding device use.
- Discuss online safety with their child where appropriate.
- Inform the school of any electronic device required for communication, medical, or educational purposes.

Pupils

- Use electronic devices responsibly.
- Follow staff instructions regarding device use.
- Respect the privacy and rights of others.

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed regularly by school management and the Board of Management to ensure it remains responsive to developments in technology, legislation, and best practice in education and safeguarding.

Ratification and Implementation

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management of Our Lady of Good Counsel School on: 18 March 2025

Chairperson: Harold Brooks

Date: 18/03/2025