



ST. PATRICK'S NATIONAL SCHOOL

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Board of Management – Chairperson: Canon David Mungavin

Smart Devices & Electronic Devices

2025

Introduction

As a result of wonderful technological advances, there is a wide range of hand-held electronic ‘gadgets’ available for use by children of school-going age. These include smart devices and smart watches of various degrees of complexity and numerous musical/visual entertainment players. As the array is constantly extending, this policy applies to all electronic equipment.

It is recognised that electronic equipment can be intrusive and distracting in all situations and is particularly so in schools. Hand-held/portable entertainment equipment is not required in school and is not permitted, except with the express consent of the Class Teacher or the Principal in special circumstances (eg. a project-related activity).

However, it is accepted by the Board of Management that smart devices and other smart devices may be needed in the wider school context, eg. parents may need to have contact with their children after school regarding transport or after-school care arrangements, etc. On the other hand, it is generally acknowledged that smart devices and other smart devices may be used for inappropriate contact, including involvement in bullying activities.

This policy outlines the strategies used to reduce the intrusiveness of unauthorised technology in our school.

Rationale

This policy reflects the following points

- the school cannot take responsibility for personal property, such as electronic equipment;
- overuse of, and reliance on, smart devices and smart devices by children is not recommended;
- constant monitoring of smart device and smart device use cannot be undertaken by school staff;
- smart devices and smart devices can be used inappropriately, eg. as a means of bullying;
- electronic games are intrusive and distracting in a school environment;
- some electronic devices may be harmful due to frequent use.

Relationship to characteristic spirit / ethos

The use of smart devices and other electronic games contravenes the provision of a safe and secure school environment, and is not conducive to learning - a provision which is central to the school's mission statement, which notes that

St Patrick's National School aims to provide a safe, caring, happy and disciplined environment where children's self-esteem, self-confidence, initiative and innovation can be nurtured within an atmosphere of mutual respect and appreciation.

Aims and objectives

Through this policy, the school aims

- to ensure a 'technology-free' school environment;
- to lessen intrusions on, and distractions to, children's learning.

In noting that there are some circumstances in which there is a need for a child to bring a smart device to school, this policy aims

- to offer the best support to children and their parents, while ensuring that this is appropriate to school;
- to ensure that a clear and fair application and monitoring procedure is in place;
- to present clear rules and conditions for use.

Content of policy

Appropriate use

Staff

All staff members have access to the school landline. Classroom supervision must be organised in the exceptional situation that a teacher has to contact parents, other professionals or outside agencies in relation to a particular child during class time.

Smart devices are used by staff on school tours and excursions, at sports events away from the school,

In such circumstances, emergency smart device contact details for all participating pupils.

Smart devices are brought by the Teacher-in-Charge, and designated staff members take responsibility for ensuring that contact is best maintained with school and parents, as appropriate. Teachers also use smart devices to document specific learning opportunities to upload and share information on the school blog.

Personal smart device calls and use of social media by staff are confined to break times. Smart device calls should be made or received in an area where pupils are not present, unless in exceptional circumstances.

Parents

While assisting with school activities, parent representatives may need to use a smart device, eg to liaise with other organisers, or as contact person with other parents. In such circumstances, it is also understood that parents may need to be contactable for personal reasons, eg. childcare.

Children

While aware of the potential misuse or abuse of smart devices by children, it is accepted that smart devices may occasionally need to be brought to school by pupils, in special circumstances and under very particular conditions. Children are not allowed the use of smart devices/electronic games during school hours. Children who need to contact home during school hours may do so through the school office, using the school landline smart device. The use of electronic gadgets are not permitted on the school premises, including during after-school extra-curricular activities. Any pupil who brings a smart device or electronic game to school without permission risks having it confiscated and only returned by the principal to his/her parent, or another other nominated adult.

Procedures

The following are the guidelines for smart device/electronic games usage in the school.

Parental requests:

(ref Appendix, Permission Request Form – Smart device)

Parents who wish their child to bring a smart device to school must apply to the principal in writing, stating reasons why the smart device is needed at school. A standardised application form is available through the school office. Applications administered by the principal, and all related correspondence is kept on file.

The conditions under which children may have a smart device in school, as stated on the form are:

1. Parents/guardians who wish their child to carry a smart device (phone/watch etc) must inform the principal of this in writing, giving reasons why the smart device is needed.

2. The school promotes use of smart devices without cameras.
3. A child who has a smart device must keep it switched off and keep it in the bottom of their school bag at the start of the school day.
4. The school takes no responsibility for the loss/breakage/theft of any smart device.

Parents also sign that they understand that any breach of these conditions will result in the confiscation of the smart device, that confiscated smart devices will be returned only to the parents of the child in question, and that should the child breach the conditions more than once, he/she will lose the privilege of being allowed to bring a smart device to school.

Pupils

Children may not use smart devices or personal smart devices during the school day. In exceptional circumstances, children may need to be contactable outside of school hours, and so permission may be given to bring in a smart device under specific conditions. Pupils who have been given permission to have a smart device in their possession at school must ensure that the device is switched off and kept in their bag at the start of the day. All pupils and their parents are aware of the terms under which smart devices are allowed and the consequences of breaking these conditions.

No electronic gadgets are permitted in school, even during after-school extra-curricular activities.

Health and safety

The school takes no responsibility for the loss, breakage, or theft of any electronic equipment.

Roles and responsibilities

It is the responsibility of each parent, through their child, to ensure that the rules laid down are followed as a condition of having permission to have a smart device in school. Any breach of these rules will result in the confiscation of the smart device.

Confiscated smart devices will be returned only to the parents of the child in question. Should a child breach the conditions more than once, he/she will lose the privilege of being allowed to bring a smart device to school.

Success criteria

It is hoped that this policy will ensure the provision of a safe school environment, conducive to learning, while also accommodating those individual circumstances that require children to be contactable by parents immediately before or after school hours.

Ratification by Board of Management

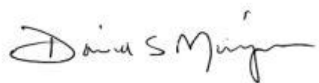
This policy was ratified by the Board of Management.

Communication

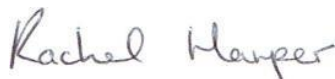
School personnel and members of the school community were informed of the policy's ratification and it was published on the school website. The policy is available in hard copy from the school office. This policy will be made available to the DES and the school's Patron, on request.

Review

This policy is scheduled for a full review in 2030. It is noted that the Board of Management will review and revise the policy as and when such a requirement is identified.



Chairperson



Principal

Date: 16th September 2026

PARENTAL PERMISSION FORM for Smart Devices brought to school

Pupil's name: _____

Smart Device _____

Date _____

1. Parents/guardians who wish their child to carry a smart device must inform the principal of this in writing, giving reasons why the device is needed.
2. No child will be allowed to bring a camera device to school.
3. A child who has a smart device must keep it switched off and keep it in their school bag at the start of the school day.
4. The school takes no responsibility for the loss/breakage/theft of any smart device.

Reasons why smart device is needed in school:

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Date: _____

Date: _____