

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.

It is recognised that technology is ever evolving and increasingly part of everyday life. However, excessive mobile phone use, and screen time generally, can have a detrimental impact on students' concentration and academic performance. Ensuring that students are not using their mobile phone for personal use during the school day can help to address these issues and foster an environment more conducive to learning, as well as supporting in-person engagement with their peers.

While the school already had measures in place to restrict the personal use of mobile phones, in compliance with the Department of Education and Youth Circular 0045/2025, the school will now have a consistent approach to ensure a restriction is implemented for the duration of the school day, which includes morning break and lunchtime.

The policy to restrict the use of phones by students during the school day will enable the school to provide a phone-free environment, to support students' wellbeing, concentration, academic performance and development. It will provide a space for students to disconnect from their online world and will assist in supporting them to become less dependent on their mobile phones.

This policy applies to mobile phones.

Smart watches, smart glasses or any other smart device which can be used to send and receive messages are not permitted in the school in any circumstance.

Objectives

The objectives of this policy are to:

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

Mobile Phone Policy

Pouches

To assist in the implementation of our mobile phone policy, the School 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 at the end of the year 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 the school year.

Daily Procedure:

Students must bring their pouch to school in their schoolbag every day, even if they are not bringing their phone to school. The pouch must contain a signed note from a parent to say "I confirm that my son does not bring his phone to school."

Upon arrival at the school premises, students must:

1. Go to one of the pouch unlocking stations located around the school.
2. Open their locked pouch by tapping the pouch unlocking station.
3. Switch off their mobile phone.
4. Place their phone inside their pouch and lock the pouch.
5. Place their pouch in their bag.

During first class in the morning, students must place their locked pouch on their desk for the duration of the class.

Following that, the pouch is the student's responsibility for the remainder of the school day.

Regular checks 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

Late or early departure

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

Damaged or Lost Pouches:

The mobile phone pouch is the property of the school. Any loss or damage to the pouch, which renders it unusable, will result in the student being required to purchase a new one for €20. 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.

Mobile Phone Policy

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 the school 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.

Forgotten Pouches

If a student arrives to school without their pouch, depending on the circumstance, they will either be sent home to get their pouch and return to school or be given a temporary pouch for the day. Students will not be permitted to attend class without their mobile phone pouch.

Parental contact with their son:

During the school day, should a parent/guardian wish to contact their son, they may do so by telephoning the school office (01 8332633), sending an email to the school office (admin@ardscoilris.com) or visiting the school, if it is an urgent matter. In all case, parents/guardians can then leave a message which will be delivered to their son.

After school Activities/trips/tours etc.

This policy applies for the duration of the school day including morning break and lunchtime 8.30am – 3.30pm. Procedures for the management of mobile phone use during the various after school activities and trips/tours etc. will be issued separately. While these procedures will uphold the spirit of the policy in relation to the non-use of mobile phones, they will take account of the possible need for a parent/guardian to make contact with their son after school hours when the school office is closed or during the school day if the heir son is taking part in an out-of-school activity.

Lunchtime

Students are reminded that they will not have access to their phones at lunchtime and therefore will need cash or a physical debit card if they are going out to buy lunch. They will also need their physical Food Village tag if they wish to collect pre-ordered food. Students are of course always encouraged to bring in a packed lunch over and above either of those options.

Sanctions

Any deliberate attempt to try to contravene or not comply with this policy will be regarded as a serious breach of the code of behavior.

If a student is found to be using and/or in possession of a mobile phone out of the pouch during the school day, the student will be suspended from school. If a student is found in possession of a second phone or deliberately tries to contravene this policy, the will be suspended from school. Should the student be involved in a repeat offence, a longer suspension will be imposed and the case may be referred to the Board of Management.