

September 2023

Dear Parents and Guardians,

We would like to direct your attention to our Mobile Phone Policy which can be found on our school website. No students are allowed to have their mobile phones or any other electronic device switched on at any time during the school day. Teachers will not require Junior Cycle students to use their mobile devices for any reason in class. Therefore, we advise that Junior Cycle students leave their phones at home. Senior Cycle students are only allowed to use their mobile phones for educational reasons only with the express permission of their classroom teacher. For the rest of the day, they must have their mobile phones switched off. No student is allowed to use their mobile devices when they enter the school in the morning time, at break and lunchtime and at the end of the school day, on the corridors, in the resource areas and toilets and on the grounds of the school building. Neither are they permitted to use their mobile devices during extra-curricular activities. Likewise, students are not allowed to wear/use earbuds on school premises as these can only be used when their mobile phone is switched on.

There are a number of reasons why we will be rigorously enforcing this rule. Firstly, academic studies show that the mobile phone is a significant distraction for students and impedes their learning. Secondly, we want our students to build meaningful and healthy relationships with each other; to spend time chatting and enjoying each other's company rather than being engrossed in their phones. Finally, the most pressing reason why we have such a strict rule regarding the use of mobile phones is for child protection concerns. Over the last school year, the issues we have dealt with in relation to students using their mobile phones in school has been a considerable cause for concern. Some of these issues included:

During class time:

- Looking up porn sites / showing pornographic images to classmates
- Taking pictures of students in the class and using the image on social media
- Taking pictures of students and editing the photograph/ using a filter to embarrass them
- Finding videos that students have posted on social media and sharing them / using them to antagonise / bully / blackmail the students
- Writing offensive emails to classmates about other students / teachers during class
- Using live streaming platforms such as 'Twitch' – these happen in real-time so content cannot be moderated.
- Playing games online

During breaks / lunch:

- Taking photographs of students using the toilet
- Taking videos / photographs of students with offensive 'POV messages' and sharing them on social media
- Provoking fights and arguments in order to video them and share them with large groups online.
- Taking inappropriate photos of themselves and sending them to others

All of these incidents were dealt with according to our Code of Behaviour and parents and guardians were informed and students offered appropriate support.

As you can understand, while they are in school, we have a duty of care to all students to ensure that they are safe and free from the harms posed by unfettered access to mobile phones. Consequently, this means that we will have a zero tolerance to any use of mobile phones at any time or in any place on our school grounds. If students are found to be using their phones, the device will be confiscated for two days (first offence) as per our policy.

We understand that teenagers and indeed adults are very much attached to their mobile phones and that this may be difficult for many students, especially after the summer months where they may have had more freedom to spend more time online. We will do our utmost to closely monitor students and their behaviour but the very nature of the size and scale of our school and the numbers of students within, means that they cannot be monitored everywhere at all times. Therefore, we appeal for your support in helping us to enforce this rule.

Please ask your child/children to either leave their phones at home or switch them off before entering school. Please do not text them or phone them during the school day. If you need to contact your child, please do so by phoning the school office. Please speak to your child/children about the safe usage of mobile phones and the internet and monitor their online activities. Consider having your child/children switch their phones off at a reasonable time in the evening. We advise all parents to refer to webwise.ie for a wealth of resources on internet safety. As always, we will best care for your children, their wellbeing and their learning with your continued support.

Later in the school year we will provide further information on how to best support your child/children to engage in appropriate and healthy use of the internet.

If you have any queries regarding this matter, please feel free to contact any of the Senior Leadership Team.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mr. Martin', written over a horizontal line.

Mr. Martin