Mobile Phone/ Smart Phones/ Smart Watches & Electronic Device Policy for Staff & Pupils.

This policy outlines the appropriate use of mobile phones/ smart watches/ any device that can take pictures or record audio in our school.

Rationale:

The possession and use of mobile phones/ smart phones/ smart watches/ internet devices by school pupils is now extensive. The use of mobile phones/ personal devices (IPod, IPad, PSPs smart watches that can take pictures or record audio or any hand held device) presents a number of problems that can prove intrusive and distracting in a school environment. They can be used to cause discipline problems or as a means of bullying others. The capacity of many devices to take photographs, make video or sound recordings could lead to a Child Protection and Data Protection issues with regard to inappropriate capture, use or distribution of images. In order to manage the issue of mobile phones, and other personal devices, this policy has been developed.

Relationship to Our School Ethos:

The use of personal mobile smart phones / smart watches that can record audio and take images and other electronic devices contravenes the provision of a safe and secure school environment, a provision that is central to our mission statement and Ethos of Scoil Mhuire Lacken.

Our primary business of teaching and learning needs to be conducted in an environment free from unnecessary distractions or disruptions, therefore **Scoil Mhuire Lacken does not permit mobile phones/ smart watches that record audio/ take images in school by students at any time.**

Staff:

- Mindful of the duties and responsibilities assigned to staff in working with children, it is vital that staff be engaged with children at all working times. In this context, access to phones should be **limited to urgency only.**
- During teaching time, while on playground duty and during meetings mobile phones should be placed on silent mode and out of sight of children
- Staff phones should not be used in sight of children.

Work Calls

- Calls to parents/guardians should be kept as short as possible. Where a lengthy conversation with parents/guardians is required, appointments should be made to meet parents following the schools Covid- 19 Response Plan.
- Calls to other professionals and organisations should be made in consultation with the Principal and classroom supervision will be arranged where appropriate.
- Calls for school business e.g. tour arrangements, arrangement for sporting events should be made through the school phone in the office.
- Parents are reminded that teachers should not be contacted to their personal phone and all communications should take place through the school phone.

Personal Calls

- In general, personal calls should be carried out during break times.
- In cases of urgency, a staff member should use discretion in making calls
- Incoming personal calls should be reserved for urgent matters
- Texting should follow the rules in relation to calls

Children's Phones

- Children are **not permitted** to bring mobile phones to school at any time. Parents are reminded that in the case of an emergency the **school office remains the first point of contact and can ensure your child is reached quickly in an appropriate way.**

- Pupils who ignore this policy and are found to have a mobile phone in school will have the phone confiscated.

- Where a pupil is found by a member of staff to be using a mobile phone or electronic device, the phone/ device will be confiscated from the pupil and returned only when the parent collects the phone/ device from the Principal's office.

- If a teacher or staff member has a suspicion that a mobile phone/ device has unsuitable material stored on it, the pupil will be asked to hand over the phone to the teacher or the school principal. The child's parents will be contacted and will have to collect the phone from the school. (Staff member completes mobile phone form which is available in secretary office- (See Appendix A attached)
- Where there is evidence that the material on the phone/ device may provide evidence relating to a criminal offence, the phone/ device will be handed over to the Gardaí for further investigation and the parents will be informed.
- The school accepts no responsibility for replacing lost, stolen or damaged mobile phones/ devices.

- Pupils who use mobile phones to bully other pupils or to send offensive messages or to make offensive calls will face disciplinary actions as per the school's Code of Behaviour.
- The same applies to pupils who take unauthorised photos or video recordings or sharing inappropriate messages via Bluetooth this will be regarded as a serious offence and disciplinary action will be taken. Any unauthorised content will be used as evidence when investigating such incidents in the school.
- If images of another pupil or teachers/staff have been taken, the phone will be confiscated and images will be removed by student in presence of teacher and parent.
- It is a criminal offence to use a mobile phone to menace, harass or offend another person. As such, if action as sanctioned by the school in this regard is ineffective, as with all incidents, the school may consider it necessary to involve the Gardaí.

Smart Watches/ Internet devices:

Smart watches that have internet enabled devices/ ability to capture images or a recording device are not permitted in Scoil Mhuire Lacken. Such devices are viewed as the same as a mobile phones and are not permitted in Scoil Mhuire Lacken

School Trips & Outings.

Children are not permitted to bring mobile phones/electronic devices/ smart watches with them on school trips and outings. Teachers attending such trips will have parents contact numbers in the case of an emergency. **In the case of a parental emergency on a school trip day, parents can contact the school office, in which the secretary will contact staff member to relay message to child.**

The school incorporates this Policy into Code of Behaviour & Acceptable Use Policy and will treat breaches in the same manner as any other breach of these Policies.

A Copy of the Mobile Phone/ Smart Watch Policy is made available to school personnel and Parent's Association . The policy is readily available to parents on request.
A copy of the policy is also published on school website.

Signed (Chairperson): Thomas Gallagher

Signed (Principal): Aoibhinn O'Neill

Date: 08/02/23

Appendix A - Form outlining incident of Mobile Phone in School.

Date:
Time:
Staff Member:
Brief Outline of Incident: (include if you feel recordings/images have been taken)
Signed: _____ (staff member) Signed: _____ (Parent) Signed: _____ (Principal) Date: _____

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