### Use of mobile phones

Introduction

The possession and use of mobile phones by school pupils is now extensive, even in the primary school sector. Use of mobile phones (particularly with the advent of increasingly sophisticated equipment and camera phones) presents a number of problems, including:

* Mobile phones can be valuable items and might render a pupil vulnerable to theft.
* Mobile phones (and their cost and level of sophistication – or otherwise) can make pupils objects of envy or disparagement and could have implications with regard to discipline and potential bullying.
* Even when apparently silent, the use of mobiles phones for texting purposes could be potentially undermining of classroom management.
* Use of the newer phones with integrated cameras could lead to child protection and data protection issues with regard to inappropriate capture, use or distribution of content.

Scope and Aims of Mobile Phone Use Policy

This policy deals primarily with student use of mobile phones while in school, on the way to and from school, on the school premises and on all school related activities, while students are under the care and instruction of any member of school staff, in both Ireland and abroad.

Personal Safety and Security

Kildare Educate Together School accepts that parents/guardians give their children mobile phones to protect them from everyday risks involving personal security and safety. There is also ever-increasing concern about children travelling alone on public transport or commuting long distances to school. It is acknowledged that providing a child with a mobile phone gives parents/guardians reassurance that they can speak with their child quickly, at any time.

The decision to provide a mobile phone to their children should be made by parents or guardians. Parents/guardians should be aware if their child takes a mobile phone onto school premises. It is the responsibility of students who bring mobile phones onto school premises to adhere to the guidelines outlined in this document.

School Rules & Sanctions

As part of the expected standards of Student Behaviour, students are expected to ensure that:

* The phone should never be turned on and/or used during the school day and/or on school premises.
* They should be kept in their bag and not be seen at all during the day.
* Phones must not be used for any purpose, e.g. phoning, texting, checking the time, using the calculator, taking photos, taking video / audio recordings, surfing the internet, etc.
* Where teachers form the opinion that the student’s mobile phone causes a disruption of any sort, it will be confiscated. It must be given to the teacher on request and it will be left in the Principal’s office for collection by the student at the end of the school day. The student is not permitted to remove the SIM card from the phone prior to it being confiscated.
* Any phone confiscated will only be returned to the student’s parent in person by the principal.
* Recording devices must never be used in the school and / or on any school related activities. If any unauthorised recording takes place, the device used will be confiscated. The student will be required to delete the offending material in the presence of the Principal. Any such device will be returned to the student, (by the Principal) after a short period of time, as decided by the Principal. A penalty for carrying out the recording will, also, be issued by the Principal.

**THE SCHOOL WILL NOT TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR ANY DAMAGE OR LOSS OF PHONES TAKEN TO SCHOOL.**

Other School Procedures

Parental / Guardian Contact

Students and parents/guardians are reminded that in cases of emergency, the School Office remains a vital and appropriate point of contact and can ensure your child is reached quickly, and assisted in any appropriate way. If a student needs to make a telephone call during the day, he/she must ask permission from the class teacher and a school telephone will be used if deemed appropriate.

Theft or Damage

* Students are required to mark their mobile phone clearly with their name.
* Mobile phones which are found in the school and whose owner cannot be located should be handed into the School Office.
* The school accepts no responsibility for replacing lost, stolen or damaged mobile phones. Their safety and security are wholly in the hands of the student.
* The school accepts no responsibility for students who lose or have their mobile phones stolen while travelling to and from school.
* It is strongly advised that students use passwords / pin numbers to ensure that unauthorised phone calls cannot be made on their phones (e.g. by other students or if stolen). Students must keep their password / pin numbers confidential. Mobile phone and / or passwords may not be shared.

Inappropriate Conduct

Any student who uses vulgar, derogatory or obscene language while using a mobile phone will face disciplinary actions as sanctioned by the School.

Students with mobile phones may not engage in personal attacks, harass another person, or post private information about another person using SMS messages, social media, taking/sending photos or objectionable images, and phone calls.

Students using mobile phones to bully/harass/offend other students and/or staff will face disciplinary actions as sanctioned by the School.

Any student(s) found using a mobile phone to gain advantage in exams or assessments will face disciplinary actions as sanctioned by the School.

Criminal Law

It should be noted that 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 is deemed ineffective, as with all such incidents, the school may consider it appropriate to involve the gardai.

Guidelines for Staff

During teaching time, while on playground duty and during meetings, mobile phones will be switched off or put on ‘silent’ or ‘discreet’ mode.

Phones will not be used in sight of children except in the case of emergency. Calls for school business e.g. checking a booking for school tour, making arrangements for sporting events etc. should be done on the school phone.

In very exceptional circumstances (e.g. a car has broken down en route to school and a mechanic has been called) the teacher may, with the permission of the principal, have their phones on for a period. An explanation should be given to the class in this case. Teachers are reminded to be careful when using their personal mobile phones to contact parents.

Staff members do not give out their phone number or that of any other staff member to pupils or parents/guardians.

Monitoring & Evaluation

This Mobile Phones – Acceptable Use Policy for students will be reviewed regularly and by the Board of Management every three years. Any staff member who is unhappy with the content or the implementation of any school policy may request a review at any time and such a request will be dealt with as quickly as possible. The Parents’ Council and / or Student Council may request a formal review at any time and the Board of Management will deal with such a request as quickly as possible.

Ratification and Review

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| Date Created | May 2014 |
| Date of Review | June 2018 |
| Date for Next Review | June 2021 |