

Policy on Mobile Phone Usage

Introduction

- This policy reinforces the expectations already set out in the school's Code of Behaviour, supporting a **consistent, transparent, and fair** approach to dealing with mobile phone misuse. This policy balances the focus on a positive learning environment, with clear, escalating consequences for breaches thereof. It is a support document to enable students to make responsible decisions while maintaining a safe, positive and responsible culture of learning.
- The Board of Management and staff of Coláiste Bhríde are acutely aware of the potential negative impact of mobile phone usage on young people individually and on their relationships with others. With this in mind, parents are expected to support this school policy on mobile phone usage.
- All communication during the school day between parents and students should be made through the school office.

Purpose and Rationale

- This policy is produced in line with the Department of Education **Circular 0045/2025**, which mandates schools to restrict student access to mobile phones during the school day. This includes:
 - The appropriateness of allowing students to bring their mobile phone to school
 - The school's approach to implementing mobile phone restrictions
 - The school's approach to managing and applying exemptions within the mobile phone usage policy
- This policy is aligned with the school's Code of Behaviour, 'Bí Cineálta' policy on anti-bullying and ICT Acceptable Usage Policy.
- This policy supports a focused, respectful learning environment, safeguarding student wellbeing and privacy, and encouraging social interaction.

This policy applies to **all students** throughout the school day whether on school grounds, engaged in school-related activities off site (see section 4 for exemptions).

General Rules

1. Mobile phones must be **switched off** at 8.50am and must not be used on school premises during school hours. Therefore, students must not use mobile phones during school hours for calls, messaging, photography, music, playing games, videography, checking the time, etc.
2. The school accepts no responsibility for mobile phones lost, damaged or stolen on school grounds or during school-related activities.
3. Mobile phones must be **switched off** and must not be used during school-related activities which take place outside of normal school hours, unless granted permission by a facilitating teacher. Examples include school trips.
4. Exemptions and medical exceptions are allowed only with prior agreement from school management and must be medically documented.
5. Phones may be used at the canteen till to pay for food by scanning the code. They can only be turned on immediately before paying and turned off immediately afterwards.

Exemptions

Where an exemption from the mobile phone usage policy rules is required, parents should consult the relevant Year Head or Deputy Principal. Any agreement will be documented on the student's file and will be communicated to all school staff and will include the time period for which this exemption applies.

Examples of circumstances where exemptions may be granted include:

- Diabetes blood glucose monitor and/or insulin delivery mechanism.
- Blood pressure monitor.
- Seizure conditions where monitoring via a mobile phone app is needed.
- Additional/special educational needs, for specific tasks relating to a student's visual impairment, hearing impairment, speech and language impairments.

The school may request medical evidence to support a request for an exemption within the school's policy on mobile phone usage.

Responsibilities

- **Each student** is responsible for ensuring their phone is **turned off and stored out of sight**, for example in their school bag or locker. The school is **not responsible** for any loss/damage. Any request to contact home should be made through the school office or member of school management and any phone calls/texts to a parent or

guardian should be made only directly in front of the school reception area at a given time where permission to use a mobile phone is granted.

- **Students who have used their phone to communicate with a parent/guardian or other person without prior permission will be subject to the sanctions below.**
- **Parents/guardians** should ensure contact during school hours is made **only** via the school office, by email or the school phone. Parents should not contact students' phones directly.
- **Teachers and staff** are responsible for consistent enforcement and reporting of breaches according to the Code of Behaviour.

Sanctions for Mobile Phone Misuse

As per the Code of Behaviour of Coláiste Bhríde, the following sanctions apply for phone misuse:

1st offence	Phone confiscated and collected by the student from the principal's office at the end of the day. Stage 3 detention issued.
2nd offence	Confiscated for one calendar week and collected by a parent/guardian from principal's office.
3rd and subsequent offences	Confiscated for two calendar weeks and collected from principal's office by a parent/guardian.
Students with phone on during exams or other serious misuse	Confiscation for two weeks and collected by parent/guardian, regardless of previous number of confiscations.

Refusal to comply with the above will result in escalation of the incident within the stages of the school's Code of Behaviour.

Phone misuse related to Bullying incidents

This mobile phone usage policy supports our **Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour**. In relation to mobile phones it states that:

Isolated or once-off incidents of intentional negative behaviour, including a once-off offensive or hurtful text message or other private messaging, do not fall within the definition of bullying and should be dealt with, as appropriate, in accordance with the school's code of behaviour. However, in the context of this policy, placing a once-off offensive or hurtful public message, image or statement on a social network site or other public forum where that message, image or statement can be viewed and/or repeated by other people will be regarded as bullying behaviour.

Should a student use their mobile phone in school as part of an incident that is deemed to fall within bullying behaviour, then that incident will be dealt with under our **Bí Cineálta** policy in addition to being subject to the sanctions outlined above.

Storage of Confiscated Devices

- Confiscated phones are turned off and are locked in a secure location by the principal for the duration outlined above in "Sanctions".
- The phone is returned to the student (for first offence) or to a parent/guardian (for subsequent offences).

Communication & Documentation

- **All incidents** are logged by the Year Head and recorded on the student's file.
- **Parents** are informed of all offences in writing.

Review & Oversight

- The policy is reviewed annually along with the Code of Behaviour. Staff, parents, and students will be consulted as part of the ongoing review process.

Other Relevant School Policies (available on school website)

- Mobile phone and ICT Acceptable Usage Policy
- Bí Cineálta – policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour
- Code of Behaviour
- Child Protection Policy
- Data Protection Policy

Policy Development Procedure

Version number	1
Policy drafted	In line with Department of Education Circular 0045/2025
Approved by Board of Management	15.9.25
Sent to KWETB for ratification	16.9.25
Next review date	May 2026

Signed:

Chairperson Board of Management