

Smartphone/Mobile Phone & Smart Device Policy



Mission Statement:

Rath N.S. is a Catholic School, run in accordance with the rules for primary Schools of the Department of Education and Science. We at Rath N.S. seek to provide an environment that is child - centred, co-educational, equality-based and democratically run. Our mission is to educate our pupils to their fullest potential while enhancing their self- esteem and creativity. All pupils are treated as individuals and their uniqueness is celebrated. All members of our school community are encouraged to respect themselves and others and we aspire to provide our children with the life skills necessary to become the best that they can be.

The Board of Management of Rath N.S. through its consultation with all staff and the Parents Association has drawn up a policy on smartphones and smart devices to protect the well-being of the whole-school community by always endeavouring to provide a safe and nurturing environment.

Background to the policy:

Our school has an acceptable use policy in place regarding the use of the internet and digital technologies within the school, including online and offline usage. It is important that parents are aware of how to keep their children safe online and the supports that are available. This resource has been developed to support parents/

guardians in this regard www.rathnationalschool.com. An essential resource for parents and parents/guardians is also the website, www.webwise.ie

This policy had been drawn up in reference to government guidance on: Keeping Childhood Smartphone Free: A guide for parents and parents' associations who wish to engage with their school community regarding internet safety and access to smartphones for primary school children:

Smartphones / mobile phones and smart devices have become widely adopted in many primary schools due to societal pressures and the expectation for pupils to own one. This policy is designed to communicate the school's position and approach concerning the potential use of smartphones/mobile phones and smart devices while adults and children are on school grounds.

This policy aligns with the feedback and recommendations that the school received from the Parents Association. This group agreed to create a voluntary agreement to delay giving children a smartphone/mobile phone or smart device until at least the completion of primary school. This voluntary agreement will help decrease the pressure among parents to buy a smartphone /mobile phone or smart device for their children.

Introduction and rationale for this policy:

The possession and use of smartphones and smart devices by school pupils is now extensive even in the primary school sector. The core business of teaching and learning needs to be conducted in an environment free from unnecessary distractions or disruptions.

There are potential harmful risks for children using smartphones/mobile phones and smart devices such as- addiction, cyberbullying, anxiety, depression and exposure to sexual content

which we want to mitigate and avoid. The capacity of many devices to take photographs, make video or sound recordings could also lead to child protection and data protection issues regarding inappropriate capture, use or distribution of images. Therefore, Rath N.S. and all partners in our school community, have developed this policy in smartphones, mobile phones and smart devices usage for pupils and the whole -school community.

The aim of this policy is to inform all members of our school community about the school's position regarding the use of smartphones/mobile phones and smart devices on the school campus.

Age of Digital Consent:

It is important for parents to be aware that in Ireland, the Age of Digital Consent is 16. The digital age of consent is the minimum age a user must be before a social media or internet company can collect, process and store their data, The digital age of consent is higher than the age you need to be to create a social media profile on platforms such as Snapchat, Instagram or Tik/Tok. For the purposes of data collection teenagers between the age of 13 and 16 must have parental permission to sign-up to social media services. Most social media platforms and services have a minimum age requirement, for the majority of these services it is 13 years old and some are set at 16(WhatsApp). Therefore technically, children under the age of 13 should not have a social media account. However, parents should be aware that it is quite easy for children to bypass the age restrictions by claiming that they are older than they are when setting up an account.

The aim of this policy:

The school is introducing this policy to prohibit and discourage the children from using or owning smartphones/mobile phones for the

duration of their time in Rath N.S. It is the school's core business and moral responsibility to cultivate a strong sense of well-being for everyone in our whole-school community. It is also paramount that a healthy school life is developed free of unnecessary distractions and harm from the misuse of smartphones/mobile phones and smart devices.

The school's position on smartphones and smart devices:

- A smart phone is a device which has the capacity to communicate, record or capture images.
- A mobile phone is a device which can make/receive calls and text messages.
- A smart device which has the capacity to communicate, record or capture images.

Pupils:

- Children are not allowed to bring smartphones, mobile phones and smart devices on to the school premise at any time.
- All children using smart devices for educational purpose (who have a report with a professional recommendation), are permitted to bring their smart device to school. Appropriate use of these devices while at school come under or Acceptable Usage Policy.

Staff:

- As a staff, we endeavour to model best practice around the use of smartphones/mobile phone and smart devices while in Rath N.S.

- It is school policy that all smartphones/mobile phones or smart devices should be switched off or in silent mode during class/pupil contact time/ official working hours.
- Rath N.S. accepts no responsibility for smartphones, mobile phones or smart devices owned by staff which are brought on to the school premises at any time.
- The Principal/deputy Principal may need to use smartphones/ mobile phones or smart devices in case of emergency or in exceptional circumstances.
- During the school day when a staff member needs to be contacted urgently, please phone the school office. The school phone is monitored by our school secretary in our office from **9am - 1pm** Mon & Thursday and **2pm-5pm** on Tuesdays. Calls received after this time will be replied to the following day. During school hours, when the secretary is not present, a SNA will monitor the school phone, should someone need to contact the school in an emergency.
- In an emergency there is a staff working group setup, which can be used by staff to communicate urgent notifications via their phone.
- For off -site trips staff will use their own phones in case the need arises that they need to communicate with families or to communicate with the school for any reason.
- Staff will still use their phones to take class photographs to update our school website - photos are stored on a central drive and then deleted from personal phones.
- Occasionally phones will be used for Google Translate or language games by our EAL teacher.

Parents/ Guardians

- As parents /guardians, we endeavour to model best practice around the use smartphones/ mobile phones and smart devices while in Rath N.S,
- Smartphones, mobile phones and smart devices should be switched off or on silent mode while on school property for meetings or events.
- As per our Acceptable Usage Policy, only authorised school personnel are permitted to take photographs /videos at school events and around the school campus. Parent/ guardians are not permitted to use smartphones/mobile phones or smart devices for capturing or recording images/videos/ audio or digital content while on school grounds or at school events.
- Rath N.S. accepts no responsibility for smartphones, mobile phone or smart devices owned by parents/ guardians which are brought on to the school premises at any time.
- Parent's/guardians must use the school office as the first point of contact if they need to contact their child during the school day.
- Parents / Guardians are asked to communicate changes in drop- off /pick up arrangements directly by telephone message to the school office or by note to the class teacher on Aladdin.

Visitors to Rath N.S.

- Smartphones, mobile phones and smart devices should be switched off or on silent mode while on school property for meetings or events
- As per our Acceptable Usage Policy, only authorised school personnel are permitted to take photographs at school events and around the school campus. Visitors are not permitted to use smartphones/ mobile phones or smart devices for capturing or recording images/ videos / audio or digital content while on school grounds or at school events.
- Rath N.S. accepts no responsibility for smartphones, mobile phones or smart devices owned and brought by anyone on to the school premises at any time.

The school's position on loss/damage of smartphones/mobile phones and smart devices.

- Rath N.S. accepts no responsibility for smartphones, mobile phones or smart devices brought by anyone onto school grounds

Sanctions for breach of this policy: The following instances will be viewed as being a breach of this policy:

- pupils who have a smartphone/mobile /phone /smart device in their possession without permission through the exemption process.
- Pupils who have permission to carry a smartphone /mobile phone or smart device but do not comply with this policy.
- Any pupils who have a smartphone /mobile phone or smart device turned on or in use in any way on the school premise or

any school- related activity (including but not limited to school tours, sporting events and extra - curricular activities)

- In all such cases the phone in question will be confiscated immediately. Parents will be notified and confiscated phones must be signed for and collected by a parent/ guardian at the school office, during the principal's office working hours from **8.30 am - 3.30 pm**. In addition the school will treat any such breach of this policy as they would treat any other breaches of school discipline in accordance with both the Code Good of Behaviour Policy and the Anti - Bullying Policy. Please reference the Code of Behaviour/Anti - Bullying Policies for Rath N.S. available on our website at [www. Rathnationalschool.com](http://www.Rathnationalschool.com)
- The school also reserves the right to report any illegal activities to the appropriate authorities, should the need arise.

Further Guidance on Smartphones in Primary Schools:

Further guidance on smartphones usage in primary schools is available at his link www.

Ratification and Communication: This policy has been ratified by the Board of Management on Oct 2024. Date of next policy review September 2025.

Signed on behalf of the Board of Management:

Chairperson: _____

October 2024

David Sheehy

Date: _____September 2024

Principal: _____

Maura Collins

Date: _____September 2024

Appendix

Voluntary Agreement

Please refer to our school website for information in relation to the voluntary collective agreement, organised by our Parents Association