



## Use of Electronic Devices Policy

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### **Introductory Statement:**

This policy applies to all pupils of St Vincent de Paul Girls School as they participate in school activities, including those which take place off the school premises. The policy also applies to all pupils who are identifiable members of the school community.

St Vincent de Paul Girls' School recognises and appreciates the important role that families play in modelling, encouraging, and promoting positive attitude to the use of electronic devices. The effective implementation of this policy relies on positive and cooperative home-school links whereby our pupils see staff and families working together in the implementation of this policy both inside and outside the school in order to create and maintain a safe and orderly learning environment for everyone.

The school appreciates the cooperation and support of the whole school community with regard to this policy.

This Policy will be implemented in conjunction with the other relevant policies, such as the Code of Behaviour, Anti-Bullying Policy, Acceptable Use Policy, Remote Teaching and Learning Policy,

### **Rationale:**

This policy was drawn up in response to technological advances that have seen a significant increase in the possession and use of mobile phones and other electronic devices by primary school children. It is also in line with guidance from the Department of Education, <https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/4509f-minister-foley-launches-new-plan-to-encourage-parents-to-avoid-buying-smartphones-for-their-children-in-primary-schools/>, <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/ece25-keeping-childhood-smartphone-free/>

The Minister for Education recently issued a press release (November, 2023) encouraging parents to avoid buying smartphones for their children in primary schools, stating 'There are concerns that smartphone use among primary school children increases the risk of cyberbullying and exposure to violence and sexual content and also reduces the number of hours they sleep at night' <https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/4509f-minister-foley-launches-new-plan-to-encourage-parents-to-avoid-buying-smartphones-for-their-children-in-primary-schools/>

- Mobile phones are intrusive and distracting in a school environment
- Mobile phones and other electronic devices may be used inappropriately
- Considerable time and resources can be taken up by schools dealing with inappropriate use of electronic devices. This use of time and resources has an impact on valuable teaching and learning time



- All pupils have access to enriching their learning in the area of technology during the school day. This is carried out under the guidance of supervision of the teacher through the use of school resources; interactive panels (each classroom) and school iPads (time-tabled for weekly classroom use)

### **Relationship to School Ethos:**

St. Vincent de Paul Girls' School aims to provide a safe and secure school environment, conducive to learning. This is central to the ethos of St. Vincent de Paul Girls' School.

### **Aims:**

The aim of the Use of Electronic Devices Policy is to provide guidance to parents, pupils and staff regarding the use of electronic devices and mobile phones on school property/school trips and outings.

1. To allow the school to function in an orderly and harmonious way.
2. To ensure the safety and well-being of all members of the school community.
3. To assist parents and pupils in understanding the systems and procedures that form part of the Use of Electronic Devices Policy and to seek their cooperation and involvement in the application of these procedures.
4. To ensure that the school's expectations and strategies are widely known and understood by all members of the school community.

### **Implementation**

*St Vincent de Paul Girls' School strongly recommends that mobile phones should not be brought to school.*

*Where a parent requires their child to have a mobile phone, pupils will only be permitted to bring a phone **with no smart technology** to school and only in line with this policy.*

*Any other electronic devices are not permitted in our school (exceptions may apply for medical purposes and educational purposes, as per Department of Education sanctioned technology – as outlined in this policy).*



**Key Terms**

In the context of this Use of Electronic Devices Policy, the following key term will be defined and understood as follows:

Electronic device	<p>Refers to any device which has a feature to communicate via message/online platform, capture images (photographs and/or video recordings), send/receive messages, and/or connect to online content.</p> <p>This includes phones, watches and any other electronic device with the above functionality. For this reason, the <b>only watches permitted on our school premises, or for any school activity (on or off site) are analogue watches</b> (i.e. a traditional watch with hands) <b>or basic digital watch (no smart features, no fitbits, etc.)</b>. Furthermore, the only phones <b>permitted on our school premises, or for any school activity (on or off site) are phones with a function to call and text only</b> (i.e. no smart phones)</p> <p><b>Throughout this policy where electronic device is mentioned this refers to the above.</b></p>
Mobile Phone	<p>Reference to Mobile Phone refers to phones with a feature to <b>call and text only, i.e. no camera/recording function, no feature to communicate via online platforms</b></p>

**Mobile phones (WITH NO SMART TECHNOLOGY AND NO CAMERA/RECORDING FUNTION) may only be brought to school when approval has been granted to parents by the school.** Parents apply to the school at the start of the school year, and/or during the year if circumstances change, requesting permission for their daughter to bring her mobile phone to school.

Parents should complete the Application Form included as Appendix A to this policy. This form can be found in your daughter’s homework journal and is also available from the school office. The form should be submitted to the class teacher/school secretary. It will then be processed by the school and kept on file for the duration of the school year.

Approval expires at the end of the school year and a new application must be made each year.

Approval may be withdrawn at the discretion of the school Principal / Board of Management if there is found to be a breach of the agreement.

Electronic equipment deemed necessary for educational and/or medical purposes (e.g. glucose monitoring system, DES sanctioned equipment). may only be brought to school following consultation with relevant stakeholders and when prior permission for its use has been granted.



Guidelines for Children and Parents/Guardian

**Reference to mobile phone refers to phones with no smart technology and no recording (moving or still) function**

- The Board of Management discourages (and asks all parents to discourage) pupils from bringing mobile phones to schools.
- Where a pupil has been granted permission to bring a mobile phone to school, the mobile phone must be handed in to the class teacher at the start of the day. The phone must remain switched off during the school day and may not be used, for any purpose, on the school premises, grounds or during off-site school activities (such as school swimming, tours/outings or sports activities).
- Parents are reminded that in cases of emergency, the school office remains the first point of contact. This ensures that your child is reached quickly, and helped in any appropriate way.
- Similarly, when off site, teachers will have contact details for parents and the school office. Should an urgent message need to be communicated to a child this can be done through the school office.
- Where a parent feels that it is essential for their child to bring a mobile phone to school, as per conditions detailed in this policy, the following will apply:
  1. Parents must complete Appendix A (homework journal, this policy, hard copy also available from the office) requesting permission from the Board of Management for their daughter to bring her mobile phone to school. (see Appendix A)
  2. One letter of request is required per school year (or, as circumstances change).
  3. The completed form may be handed into the class teacher/school secretary.
  4. This letter, if approved, will be kept on file.
  5. All mobile phones brought to school should be clearly labelled with the child's name and class.
  6. The mobile phone must be turned off and handed in to the class teacher at the start of the school day.
  7. Any mobile phone handed in will be kept in a secure location until the end of school day.
  8. The school, school personnel or Board of Management will not be liable for the repair/replacement of lost, stolen or damaged devices.
  9. It is the responsibility of the pupil herself to ask for the mobile phone back at home time.
  10. The mobile phone can only be switched on when the pupil has left the school premises/grounds.
  11. Should a member of staff believe that a pupil may have brought a mobile phone (without prior consent) or an electronic device to school, the school may contact the parent/guardian. A parent/guardian may be invited to come into the school to discuss the matter.
  12. Any mobile phone brought to school/school outings without the parental consent form being approved and without the phone being handed to the class teacher, will be confiscated. Where a mobile phone has been confiscated by a member of staff, it will be kept in the Principal's office and will only be returned to a parent/guardian.



13. Where a pupil is found by a member of staff to be using a mobile phone or other electronic device for any purpose, the phone/device will be confiscated from the pupil and returned only to the parent/guardian. Permission to bring in a mobile phone may be rescinded
14. The school incorporates this policy into the Code of Behaviour, Anti-Bullying Policy, Acceptable Use Policy and Remote Teaching and Learning Policy and will treat breaches accordingly.
15. If a pupil is found taking or having taken photographs or video footage with a mobile phone/electronic device of either themselves, other pupils or school personnel action will be taken according to the school's Code of Behaviour, Anti-Bullying Policy and Acceptable Use Policy. If a pupil shares/comments/likes/willingly participates in inappropriate recordings/photos/messages which can be shared on any social media platform and which are in breach of our school's policies this will be regarded as a serious/gross unacceptable behaviour and action will be taken according to the school's Code of Behaviour, Anti-Bullying Policy and Acceptable Use Policy. The school will facilitate the investigation of alleged incidents of breach of this policy where such incidents are brought to the attention of school personnel (either by pupils themselves, their families, or members of the wider school community). In such instances, the school's investigation will be based on the evidence made available to us (for example screenshots).
16. As per the school's Anti-Bullying Policy, placing a once-off offensive or hurtful public message, image (still or moving), or statement on a social network site or other public forum where that message, image (still or moving), or statement can be viewed, reposted, or shared by other people will be regarded as bullying behaviour.
17. Defamatory and/or impersonated comments, content, photos, videos, including impersonated accounts posted and/or shared on a social media platform that bring our school and/or school personnel into disrepute will be treated as a gross unacceptable behaviour and sanctions will apply as per our Code of Behaviour. The school will facilitate the investigation of alleged incidents of cyber bullying involving pupils of St Vincent de Paul Girls' School where these incidents are brought to the attention of school personnel (either by pupils themselves, their families, or members of the wider school community). In such instances, the school's investigation will be based on the evidence made available to us (for example screenshots).
18. The Board of Management and/or school personnel will seek legal advice and may pursue legal action if deemed appropriate to do so.
19. School staff will regularly talk to all pupils to ensure policy guidelines are adhered to.



**Success Criteria:**

- Strict adherence to policy
- Cooperation and compliance from parents, pupils and the wider school community
- Following best practice and guidance (i.e. <https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/4509f-minister-foley-launches-new-plan-to-encourage-parents-to-avoid-buying-smartphones-for-their-children-in-primary-schools/>)
- Positive feedback from whole school community

**Roles and Responsibility:**

- The Board of Management will provide a safe environment, supporting the Principal and Staff in implementing this policy and other related policies.
- Coordination and overall monitoring will be undertaken by the Principal and Deputy Principal and school personnel.
- Parents will be made aware of the policy and will understand the importance of compliance and co-operation, encouraging and supporting their children in its implementation.
- Pupils will read, understand and accept this policy in line with other policies.
- School personnel will be aware of the policy and will co-operate in its implementation.

The Electronic Devices Policy for St Vincent de Paul Girls' School was drafted and ratified by the Board of Management in June 2023. It will be effective from September 2023 and will be reviewed regularly.

Policy reviewed, updated and approved by The Board of Management in January 2024.

Signed by:

Chairperson: \_\_\_\_\_

Principal: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



**Appendix A**

Dear Chairperson Board of Management,

I wish to apply for permission for my child to bring a mobile phone (with no smart technology) to school, for the reason outlined below and as per the guidelines and conditions set out in this policy. I confirm my daughter has read, understands and agrees to the guidelines and conditions set out in this policy.

Name of Pupil: \_\_\_\_\_

Reason: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_ Class Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

**Conditions**

Please indicate that both pupil and parent(s)/guardian(s) accept the following conditions

- I/We have read, understood and accept the Use of Electronic Devices Policy, Code of Behaviour, Anti-bullying Policy, Acceptable Use Policy and Remote Teaching and Learning Policy
- I/We apply for the above named pupil to bring her mobile phone to school
- I/We accept that any loss, damage or theft sustained to the phone will not be the responsibility of St. Vincent de Paul Girls School
- I/We accept that the pupil's phone will be properly labelled
- I/We accept that the mobile phone will be turned off on entering the school grounds and handed to the class teacher on entering the class room
- I/We accept that it is the responsibility of the pupil herself to ask for the mobile phone back at home time
- I/We accept that the mobile phone can only be switched on when the pupil has left the school grounds
- I/We accept that the no other electronic device will be brought to school, including smart phones, watches and/or any device with a recording feature (photo/video) and/or with the ability to connect via any feature to another device and/or online access.

Signature of Parent/Parents: \_\_\_\_\_

I agree to abide by the guidelines in this policy and the conditions set out above

Signature of Pupil: \_\_\_\_\_

**Office Use:**

Date of Application received:	Date of Approval issued:
	Signed: