

Mount Lourdes Grammar School

Mobile Phone and Electronic Devices Policy

**Rationale**

Mobile Phones (and other electronic devices e.g., Smart Phones etc.) are now features of modern society and most of our students own them. Increasing sophistication of mobile phone technology presents several issues for schools:

* The high value of modern phones, Smart Watches and other electronic devices etc.
* The integration of cameras and internet browsing into phones, leading to potential child protection/safeguarding and data protection issues
* The potential to use the phone, e.g., for texting, whilst on silent mode

It is not realistic to prohibit phones being brought to school, nor is it logistically possible for the school to collect phones each morning and return them in the afternoon.

We aim to create a focused and respectful atmosphere in which students can fully engage in education by eliminating constant distractions and social pressures associated with mobile phone usage.

There are times when it is genuinely appropriate and beneficial for students to have access to a mobile phone. With teachers increasingly placing notes and tasks online, students could on occasion benefit from using their mobile phone during a lesson. However, this can only occur with the teacher’s consent, with the teacher being present and students connected to the C2K Wireless Service.

**Policy**

1. Phones must be switched off (not on silent mode) and kept inside the student’s blazer pocket whilst on the school premises, or engaged in school activities, unless its use is explicitly authorised by a teacher or a member of school staff. Students are **not** permitted to use these devices between classes, at morning break or at lunch times.
2. Mobile Phones and other electronic equipment e.g., Smart Watches etc. must not be used for any purpose e.g., phoning, texting, listening to music, taking photos, taking videos, or uploading material to social media, on the school premises during the school day.
3. It is strongly advised that students use passwords/pin numbers to ensure that no unauthorised activities can 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 should not be shared.
4. The school will not take responsibility for inappropriate usage of a phone outside of the school day, weekends, or school holidays. Issues arising from inappropriate phone usage outside the school day is **not** the responsibility of the school.
5. The school accepts no responsibility for any malfunction of a phone due to changes made to it while on the school network, or whilst resolving any connectivity issues.
6. The school is not responsible for the day-to-day maintenance or upkeep of the user’s phone such as charging, the installation of software or the resolution of hardware issues.
7. Parents have full responsibility regarding the material their daughter has access to, on their personal mobile phone/device and they should make their daughter aware of the legal implications regarding their usage. These issues are covered as part of the school’s preventative curriculum however, ultimate responsibility for the use of the phone lies with the owner.
8. This policy also applies to students during school excursions, camps and extracurricular activities. Parents of students needing to use their mobile phones in exceptional circumstances, should negotiate arrangements with the relevant school staff, prior to departure from the school.
9. Under no circumstances are phones permitted to be used in certain areas within the school site, e.g., changing rooms, toilets, and designated Health & Wellbeing areas.
10. In the event of images being taken on the school premises, without permission, they must be deleted in the presence of senior staff before the phone is taken off the school premises.
11. Students should not make any derogatory, defamatory, rude, threatening, or inappropriate postings about the school or anyone (e.g., other students, staff, governors, visitors etc.) connected to the school.
12. Students using mobile phones within school to engage in bullying behaviours towards other students, or to send offensive messages/calls, will face disciplinary actions as outlined in the school’s Positive Behaviour Management Procedures Policy.

1. If a teacher has any suspicion that a mobile phone has unsuitable material stored on it, students will be required to hand over the phone to a teacher and parents will be asked to collect it from the school.
2. Mobile phones which are found in the school and whose owner cannot be located, should be handed in at the Main Office.
3. Where there is a suspicion that the material on the mobile may provide evidence relating to a criminal offence, the phone will be handed over to the PSNI for further investigation. Parents will be informed in such circumstances. 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 in this regard is deemed ineffective, as with all such incidents, the school may consider it necessary to involve the PSNI.
4. In accordance with instructions issued by the examination’s regulator JQC

***‘Possession of a mobile phone or other unauthorised material is not allowed - even if you do not intend to use it. You will be subject to penalty and possible disqualification from the exam/qualification’,***

This guidance also applies to internal examinations in Mount Lourdes Grammar School.

If a student breaches these rules, she will be asked to switch off her phone, and hand it into the Main Office, where her name will be recorded. The phone will be placed in a sealed envelope and must be collected at 3:25 p.m. Failure to comply with this guidance will be addressed in line with the school’s Positive Behaviour Management Procedures Policy.

If a student repeatedly breaches these rules, parents will be contacted and required to come into school to collect the device, or, the student may be asked to hand in their phone at the Main office each morning before 8.55a.m. It will be placed in a sealed envelope and returned to the student at 3.25p.m

**Emergencies**

If a student needs to contact her parents/guardians, a member of staff will do so using a school phone.

If parents need to contact children urgently, they should phone the Main Office and a message will be relayed promptly. They should not contact their daughter directly.

**Responsibility for Mobile Phones**

The school accepts no responsibility for the theft, loss, damage, or health effects (potential or actual) relating to mobile phones in the possession of students and will not undertake any related investigation. It is the responsibility of parents and students to ensure mobile phones are properly insured.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the school’s other policies in particular the Positive Behaviour Management Procedures Policy.