



Oatlands College Mobile Phone and Digital Device Policy

Introduction

The Mobile Phone and Digital Device Policy exists for the safety and protection of all members of the school community. This policy is directly related to and should be read in reference with the Oatlands College Acceptable Usage Policy (AUP), Code of Behaviour and the Child Safety Statement. This Mobile Phone and Digital Device Policy has been developed as per Circular 0038/2018 and in partnership with staff, students and parents/guardians and will be reviewed on a regular basis.

Rationale for Policy

Research shows that digital technologies can play a positive role in supporting high quality teaching, learning and assessment. These technologies help promote student engagement and enhance the teaching and learning experience by opening new opportunities for learning, promoting independent learning and providing access to quality online resources. However, their use needs careful consideration and management if they are to have a positive educational impact.

Oatlands College students use an iPad for learning in the classroom. This policy along with the Acceptable Usage Policy (AUP) aims to ensure the iPad contributes positively to supporting high quality teaching, learning and assessment.

While Oatlands College accepts that it is a student's right to have a mobile phone, the following policy aims to maintain a safe, nurturing environment where the personal dignity and rights of all the members of the school community are preserved.

While it is accepted that technology, including mobile phones, are an important part of many young people's daily lives, parents/guardians may require their children to have a phone for a variety of reasons, including safety and ease of contact before and after school.

However, mobile phones have the potential to disrupt learning and to impact the safety of our students and the efficient operation of the school:

- Having a phone reduces attention and subsequent memory during classes.
- Their use can potentially lead to students being subjected to bullying or inappropriate contacts.
- They can disrupt the learning environment.
- Camera functions can lead to child protection and data protection issues with regard to inappropriate capture and use or distribution of images.

The school's policy on mobile phones and digital devices is therefore devised with the intention of ensuring that teaching and learning can take place without interruption and with the intention of protecting students and staff from potential harassment or bullying. It is also intended to increase face-to-face social interaction between students.

Scope of this Policy

This Mobile Phone and Digital Device Policy applies to all students while they are in school, while they are on the school premises and attending off-campus school activities. This policy relates to all electronic devices, including mobile phones, smart watches, i-Pads, tablet computers and related electronic devices and equipment.

Roles and Responsibilities

Students

- Read the policy with your parents/guardians.
- Be familiar with the contents of the policy. i.e., when mobile phone and iPad are permitted to be used, when it is not permitted to be used, etc.
- Comply with and support the school's mobile phone and digital device policy.

Parents/Guardians

- Parents and guardians should read the policy and ensure they are aware of their responsibilities in relation to this mobile phone and digital device policy.
- Be aware of striking a healthy balance regarding their child's screen time and usage of their mobile phone. Technology is used for a wide variety of purposes, many of which may be educational and interactive, but it is important to be aware of the time spent on and usage of mobile phones.
- Support the school's mobile phone and digital device policy.

Staff

- Implementation of the school's mobile phone and digital device policy.
- Implementation of sanctions in cases where there is a breach of the policy.

Use of Mobile Phones

1. For Junior Cycle and Transition Year mobile phones must be switched off, unseen and unheard once students enter the school grounds until the end of school day. If a student is using their mobile phone, it is a breach of the mobile phone policy and sanctions will apply.
2. Senior Cycle students who do not have access to a learning device may be permitted to use their phones if and only with the express permission and supervision of their teachers.
3. Students are permitted to use their mobile phone in the canteen for the sole purpose of paying for food/drinks. They must switch their phone off once they have paid for food/drinks.
4. Students are permitted to use their mobile phone following the conclusion of the school day outside the school grounds. In doing so, students must adhere to the Schools Code of Behaviour, the Anti-Bullying Policy, the Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) and the Child Safeguarding Statement.
5. Students attending supervised study must switch off their phone prior to the commencement of after-school study.
6. Students participating in school-related activities (e.g., extra-curricular activities, co-curricular activities, school trips and tours, etc.) must abide by the instructions of the staff members governing these activities.
7. No student is permitted to use a mobile phone to take a photograph or any recording (audio / visual) on the school premises or at any school event without the express permission of a member of staff.
8. Students are not permitted to upload to the internet or online storage e.g., cloud / drive, or transfer by text or social media photographs / recordings (audio / visual) / digital images of other members of the school community without their permission and, in the case of a student, without the permission of the parents/guardians of that student.

Use of iPads

Oatlands College students use an iPad for learning in the classroom. This device is for classroom use only and all students must adhere to the schools iPad rules at all times.

Revised iPad Rules

1. iPads must be fully charged for each school day and in a protective case at all times.
2. iPads cannot be used by students in any way without the permission of a teacher.
3. iPads should remain in your school bag until a teacher instructs you to use it. This includes before class begins in the morning and throughout the school day.
4. iPads are for educational purpose only.
5. iPads are for individual use only. Students must not use, interfere with or interact with another student's iPad for any reason.
6. iPads will be monitored by teachers over the duration of the academic year. iPads may be subject to inspection by teachers, tutors and year heads at any time.
7. Students must ensure that their iPads are free of irrelevant content. Any content (including images and photographs) stored on your iPad must be relevant to your school work.
8. Each student in the college is subject to an "Acceptable Use Policy (AUP)". This policy details the specific practices and expectations that each student must agree to in order to benefit from continued access to iPads, school internet and other educational resources. The school's AUP is found in the school journal and on the school website. Each AUP must be signed in your journal. Students should be familiar with the policy and understand the sanctions attached to any breach of the school rules relating to iPad use.
9. Students must use the Oatlands College crest or a photograph of their timetable as the image for their home screen, screensaver and for any logos they have as part of their school activities on all digital devices they use in the school. e.g.: iPad home screen, Teams ID photo etc. No other images are acceptable.

Procedures for Necessary and Emergency Contact

- If students need to be contacted during the school day, parents/guardians are respectfully asked not to contact them via their mobile phone.
- All communication must go through the school office.
- Contact with the school office may be made at 01-2888533 and a message will be given to the student if required. Permission may be sought for students to use the office phone in case of emergencies.
- A student, who wishes to go home for any reason during the school day, must arrange to do so through the school office and not independently by mobile phone. This ensures that correct procedures for leaving school before the ending of classes for that day are observed. Responsibility cannot be taken by the school authorities for students who arrange independently to go home without following proper procedure. Any such arrangement is a breach of the Code of Behaviour for students and will incur sanctions.

Sanctions for Misuse of Mobile Phones

If a member of staff witnesses a student using a mobile phone for any reason without express permission from a member of staff, their mobile phone (including its SIM card) will be confiscated until the end of the school day.

Procedures for confiscation of mobile phone

- The staff member will ask the student to turn off the mobile phone (if not already done so).
- The student will hand over the phone (including its SIM) to the staff member.
- The staff member will hand in the mobile phone to the Deputy Principal's office where the phone will be placed in an envelope with a complaint form containing the relevant details (student name, year group, date and time of confiscation, etc.) and secured.
- Sanctions as per Code of Behaviour will apply.

Incidents where students use mobile phones or digital device to bully other students or send offensive messages/calls will be investigated under the Anti-Bullying Policy. It should be noted that it is a criminal offence to use a mobile phone or digital device to menace, harass, intimidate or offend another person. As such, the Gardaí may be asked to investigate such incidents.

If a member of staff witnesses a student using a mobile phone or digital device to take photographs / recordings (audio / visual) / digital images in breach of the school's mobile phone and digital device policy, the staff member will ask the student for the phone/device and follow the procedures above. They will report the incident to the year head and an investigation will take place.

If a student refuses to cooperate with the procedures as outlined it will be considered an instance of serious misbehaviour and further sanctions may apply.

Collection of the Mobile Phone

The student may collect the mobile phone from the Deputy Principal at the end of the school day if it has been confiscated.

The school accepts no responsibility for replacing lost, stolen or damaged mobile phones. The safety and security of mobile phones and digital devices is wholly a matter for students and their parents/guardians.

This policy was reviewed and re-ratified by the Board of Management on 19th September 2023.