



# Powerstown Educate Together National School

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# Electronic Device Policy (EDP)

*This policy has been formulated by Powerstown ETNS to assist teachers, pupils and parents in making an informed decision in relation to the safe and practical use of technology in education.*

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## Introduction

The possession and use of electronic devices and mobile phones by school pupils is now extensive.

Appropriate use of electronic devices, including mobile phone technology is welcomed at Powerstown ETNS and overall, electronic devices are seen as a valuable educational tool. At the same time, the school recognises potential problems associated with electronic devices and mobile phone, some of which are listed below:

- Mobile phones can be valuable items and might render a pupil vulnerable to theft.
- Mobile phones (and their cost and level of sophistication – or otherwise) can make pupils objects of envy or disparagement and could have implications with regard to discipline and potential bullying.
- Even when apparently silent, the use of mobiles phones for texting purposes could be potentially undermining of classroom discipline.
- Use of phones with integrated cameras could lead to child protection and data protection issues with regard to inappropriate capture, use or distribution of images and videos.
- Many of the above issues also pertain to I-pods, ipads, Game Boys, Nintendos and other electronic devices. They can be very intrusive, distracting and anti-social in a school environment.

## Aims

The aim of this Digital Device Policy is to

- ensure that pupils will benefit from learning opportunities offered by electronic resources in a safe and effective manner.
- inform all members of our school community about the appropriate use of electronic devices and mobile phones at our school
- outline the procedures and processes of this policy

## Mobile Phones:

The school's Board of Management accepts that it is not realistic to have a policy which prohibits pupils from taking phones to school. Not only would it be impractical to forbid pupils from carrying them (when the latest phones are so slim that they could be hidden easily), but it is believed that a number of parents would be concerned for health and safety reasons if their child were not allowed to carry a phone at all (and might therefore be unable to contact their parents in respect of any situation that might arise.)

## Mobile Phones & Electronic Devices:

The school acknowledges the usefulness and practicality of mobile phones / electronic devices and recognises their potential as an educational resource. Many features on mobile phones /electronic devices such as Organiser (calendar, calculator, convertor, etc.), Applications (voice recorder, stopwatch, image editor, video recording) or even Alarms are very useful and may be used under the direction of the class teacher. If and when any such activities take place parents will be notified in advance.

Nevertheless, it is the Board's policy to ensure appropriate use of mobile phones and electronic devices while on school premises, grounds or during off-site activities e.g. school tour, by means of the following guidelines:

## Guidelines for pupils

- The Board encourages parents to request that children leave mobile phones and/or electronic devices at home as they are valuable and may be lost or stolen.
- Where a pupil does bring a mobile phone to school, the phone must remain switched off and in the pupil's school bag during the school day and may not be used, for any purpose, on school premises, grounds or during off-site school activities (such as school tour or sports activities.)
- Where a pupil brings an electronic device to school (e.g. ipad, tablet etc), it must be at the request of the class teacher
- Parents are reminded that in cases of emergency, the school office remains the first point of contact and can ensure your child is reached quickly, and helped in any appropriate way.

### ***Where a parent feels that their child having a phone in school is essential the following will apply:***

- The school accepts no responsibility for replacing lost, stolen or damaged mobile phones / electronic devices. The safety and security of mobile phones is wholly a matter for pupils/parents.
- All phones brought to school must have a sticky label on the back with the child's name.
- The phones must be turned off before the school day starts (i.e. prior to 8.30am).
- Phones which are not switched off will be confiscated by the class-teacher and returned only to the parent/guardian - at the end of the school-day.
- The school will not be liable for the replacement of lost, stolen or damaged devices.
- The Electronic Device Policy is consistent with the Code of Behaviour Policy and inappropriate use of mobile phones or any electronic equipment will be treated as "serious misbehaviour" in accordance with the Code of Behaviour policy.
- Taking photographs or video footage with a mobile phone or electronic device of either other pupils or teachers or sharing inappropriate messages will be regarded as "serious misbehaviour" and sanctions will apply according to the school's Code of Behaviour Policy.
- If images of other pupils or teachers have been taken, the phone/electronic device will not be returned to the pupil until the images have been removed by the pupil in the presence of a teacher and parents/guardians.
- If a teacher has reason to believe that a mobile phone / electronic device has unsuitable material stored on it, pupils will be required to hand over the phone / electronic device to a teacher and parents/guardians will be asked to collect it from the school.
- Pupils using their own technology in school, such as leaving a mobile phone turned on or using it in class is in direct breach of the school's acceptable usage policy.
- Pupils sending nuisance text messages is in direct breach of the school's acceptable use policy.
- The unauthorised taking of images with a mobile phone camera or electronic device, still or moving is in direct breach of the school's acceptable usage policy.
- Please see AUP Policy and Code of Behaviour for further information.

***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 Gardaí for further investigation. Parents will be informed in such circumstances.***

## School Trips and Outings

Children are not permitted to bring mobile phones / electronic devices with them on school trips and tours. Parents will be able to contact the teacher in charge via the school office.

## Guidelines for Staff

- During teaching time, while on playground duty and during meetings, mobile phones will be switched off or put on 'silent' or 'discreet' mode, with 'vibrate' off
- Mobile Phone / Electronic Device use during pupil contact time must be for school purposes only e.g. Class Dojo, Aladdin etc.
- Mobile Phone / Electronic Device should be kept in a safe, secure place.
- When leaving the classroom (PE, nature walk, fire drill) take an electronic / mobile phone device with you.
- If taking photos of pupils/school related events on your mobile phone/ electronic device, please remove to your school computer/laptop or school hard drive within 24 hours. Please ensure photos do not upload to your cloud / google photos.
- Mobile phones will not be used for texting or phone calls within teaching / pupil contact time except in the case of emergency.
- Calls for school business e.g. checking a booking for school tour, making arrangements for sporting events etc. should be done on the school phone.
- If situation arises whereby a staff member needs to be contactable please speak to Principal or DP and necessary arrangements will be put in place. Also ensure you provide persons with the school landline, in case they are unable to contact you.
- School phone / email / class dojo / school approved applications should be used to contact parents.
- Class Dojo is a behaviour management tool. If teachers wish to discuss something with parents it should be done face to face, if this is not possible a phone call, the third point of call is via email.

***The Board of Management advises all staff to keep their personal mobile phone number and social networking sites private.***

## Guidelines for Parents

- The Staff and BOM recognise the parents as the child's primary educator and believe that parents have an important role to play in ensuring their child's appropriate and safe use of electronic devices
- Parents and guardians are encouraged to regularly check their child's online activity / digital footprint. Parents are encouraged to check social media apps (e.g. Facebook, Snapchat, Viber, Whatsapp, Instagram etc) on mobile phones and electronic devices to ensure they are aware of their child's online interaction with others and approve of same.
- Parents/guardians are encouraged to talk with their child regularly about their use of electronic devices and discuss who their child is interacting with and the content of such interactions.

## Legislation

The school will provide information on the following legislation relating to use of electronic devices which teachers, students and parents should familiarise themselves with:

- Data Protection (Amendment) Act 2003
- Child Trafficking and Pornography Act 1998
- Interception Act 1993
- Video Recordings Act 1989
- The Data Protection Act 1988

## Support Structures

Powerstown ETNS endeavours to have support structures in places to ensure the appropriate use of electronic devices in school and to ensure staff, parents and pupils feel supported in same.

- The school will provide Internet Safety and Cyber Bullying talks bi-annually for pupils from 2<sup>nd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> class.
- The school will provide Internet Safety and Cyber Bullying talks for parents and guardians bi-annually to all parents in the school. Pupils from 4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> class are permitted to attend this talk.

- Community Gardaí link in with classes re Internet Safety and Cyber Bullying annually.
- Staff will regularly partake in Continuous Professional Development in relation to AUP, internet safety and Cyber Bullying.
- The school will inform students and parents of key support structures and organisations that deal with illegal material or harmful use of the Internet.

## **Sanctions**

Misuse of electronic devices may result in disciplinary action, as outlined in the school's Code of Behaviour.

Sanctions can include written warnings, withdrawal of access privileges and, in extreme cases, suspension or expulsion.

***The school also reserves the right to report any illegal activities to the appropriate authorities.***

## **Review**

This policy was reviewed in September 2015 and will be updated in line with department guidelines.

## **Ratification**

This policy was ratified by the BOM