



MOBILE DEVICE IN SCHOOL POLICY

Effective August 2025

Introduction

De La Salle College is dedicated to fostering a safe, focused, and respectful learning environment for all pupils. In line with guidance from the Northern Ireland Education Minister, which highlights the importance of reducing distractions and promoting positive mental health in schools, we have implemented a mobile phone policy to ensure that mobile phones do not interfere with teaching and learning or the well-being of our pupils.

This policy is part of the school's broader efforts to promote safeguarding, address bullying, and encourage positive behaviour while ensuring that pupils engage fully in high-quality teaching and social interactions during the school day.

Policy Statement

While De La Salle College acknowledges the widespread use of mobile phones in everyday life and their potential benefits in emergencies, we strongly encourage pupils not to bring mobile phones to school. This approach aligns with recent Department of Education recommendations to minimise dependency on mobile phones and reduce associated risks, such as online bullying and inappropriate use of technology.

For pupils who must bring a mobile phone, strict guidelines have been implemented to regulate its use and storage during the school day.

Rationale

This policy has been developed in response to recent Department of Education guidance, which highlights the risks associated with mobile phone use in schools, including:

- Disruption to teaching and learning.
- Risks to child protection and data security.
- Mental health and wellbeing concerns.
- The potential for online bullying and inappropriate use of technology.

By minimising mobile phone use, De La Salle College seeks to promote a healthier school environment where pupils can focus on their education and engage in meaningful social interactions.

The policy reflects our Lasallian ethos, which emphasises creating an inclusive and respectful community focused on quality education and positive relationships. By minimising mobile phone use, the school supports equity among pupils, reduces distractions, and promotes social interaction, aligning with principles of respect for all persons, faith in the presence of God, and concern for social justice. This approach fosters mindfulness, safety, and a sense of belonging while ensuring pupils can fully engage in their education and personal development.

This policy is further supported by feedback from our school community. A recent survey conducted among staff, pupils and parents revealed that a significant majority support the restriction of mobile phone use during school hours, citing concerns about potential distractions and the impact on academic performance. Additionally, many respondents expressed worries about the role of mobile phones in facilitating bullying and other negative behaviours.

By encouraging pupils not to bring mobile phones to school, we aim to:

- **Enhance Academic Focus:** Reducing potential distractions to improve concentration and learning outcomes.
- **Promote Social Interaction:** Encouraging face-to-face communication among pupils during breaks and lunchtimes.
- **Ensure Safety and Wellbeing:** Minimising opportunities for cyberbullying and exposure to inappropriate content during school hours.

Responsibilities

- Pupils remain responsible for their phones and any associated risks (e.g., theft, loss, damage). The school will not accept liability for lost, stolen, or damaged items.
- Parents and carers are expected to support this policy by encouraging their children to leave mobile phones at home and cooperating with the school's guidelines.

Policy Guidelines

1. Storage of Mobile Phones

- Pupils who bring mobile phones to school must hand them over to their form teacher during morning registration.
- Phones will be stored securely in individually labelled padded envelopes within form class boxes in the school office.
- Phones will be returned to pupils by their form teacher at the end of the school day.

2. Encouragement to Leave Phones at Home

- Parents and carers are strongly encouraged to ensure that pupils leave their mobile phones at home unless it is essential for emergency purposes.
- This reduces risks such as loss, theft, or inappropriate use, and fosters a more focused and inclusive learning environment.

3. Exceptions for Medical Use

- Pupils with medical needs (e.g., Type 1 diabetes) requiring mobile phones for health monitoring must obtain a 'Medical Use' card from their Head of Year.

4. Contact Between Parents and Pupils

- Parents are asked not to contact their child directly during school hours via mobile phones.

- In emergencies, parents can contact the school office, and messages will be relayed to the pupil.
- Pupils needing to contact home can use one of the school phones with staff permission.

5. Prohibited Uses

- Mobile phones may not be used during the school day for any purpose, including social media, photography, or messaging.
- Recording or sharing images, videos, or audio recordings of other pupils or staff is strictly forbidden.

6. Sanctions for Breach of Policy

- First Offence: The phone will be confiscated, stored securely, and returned at the end of the day. Parents will be informed.
- Second Offence: The phone will be confiscated and must be collected by a parent or guardian.
- Third Offence: The phone will be confiscated, requiring parental collection, and additional disciplinary measures such as detention may apply.
- Any pupil who persistently refuses to cooperate with these ground rules will be subject to the school's procedures governing good behaviour. In addition, a pupil will be required to hand over the phone to a member of staff in the following circumstances:
 - If the mobile device is **VISIBLE**
 - If a member of the staff of the school has any suspicion that a mobile device has unsuitable material stored on it
 - If a pupil has disrupted a lesson using a mobile device
 - If a pupil has used a mobile device to take photographs on the school site or has used it for any form of bullying. In such a case, parents will be asked to collect it from a senior member of staff.
- In circumstances where there is a suspicion that the material on the mobile device may provide evidence relating to a criminal offence, the mobile device will be handed over to the police for further investigation.
- Parents will need to recover the mobile device from the police in such circumstances.

7. Examinations

- All mobile devices, including smartwatches, must be surrendered to the Chief Examination Officer during examinations. Breach of this rule may result in disqualification.

De La Salle College is committed to ensuring that all pupils benefit from an inclusive, focused, and respectful educational experience. We appreciate the cooperation of parents, pupils, and staff in implementing this policy.