Dalriada School

Mobile Device Policy

Dalriada school is committed to creating an environment where every pupil can learn, interact and thrive. This policy supports that commitment by promoting the safe, responsible and appropriate use of mobile devices throughout the school day. Developed in consultation with pupils, parents and staff, this policy reflects our shared commitment to learning, wellbeing and safeguarding. It provides clear expectations for the responsible use of mobile devices, helping to create a focused, respectful and inclusive school environment.

<u>Consultation</u>

March 2026 – pupil

March/April 2026 – parents

May 2026 – staff

May 2026– SLT

June 2026 - Safeguarding Team

August 2026– to Board of Governors

Adopted- 4 September 2026

Review Date – April 2028 (or as required by legislation or guidance)

Introduction

Mobile devices are now an integral part of everyday life and play an important role in how young people communicate, access information and engage with the world around them. As technology continues to evolve, schools must ensure that its use supports learning, wellbeing, safeguarding and the development of positive relationships within the school community.

This Mobile Device Policy has been developed to provide clear expectations regarding the use of mobile phones, smart watches and other personal digital devices by pupils while on the school site and during school activities. It reflects the changing nature of technology, the growing body of research on its impact on learning, concentration, mental wellbeing and social interaction, and the school's commitment to providing a safe, respectful and focused learning environment. The policy also takes account of current guidance issued by the Department of Education Northern Ireland, which advises that the personal use of mobile phones should be restricted during the school day for the vast majority of pupils.

At the heart of this policy is the school responsibility to safeguard and support every young person in our care. While mobile devices can offer benefits, unrestricted access can present challenges including distraction from learning, reduced face-to-face interaction, online safety concerns, cyberbullying, privacy issues and potential impacts on emotional wellbeing. Current Northern Ireland guidance highlights growing concerns regarding the effects of mobile phone use on children's learning, social development, sleep and exposure to harmful online content.

This policy has been shaped through consultation with pupils, parents/carers and staff. Their views have helped ensure that our approach is balanced, practical and responsive to the needs of our school community. We recognise that families expect young people to travel safely to and from school and, in some circumstances, mobile devices may be important for communication, medical, safeguarding or additional learning needs. This policy therefore seeks to balance these legitimate needs with the school's duty to maintain an environment where teaching, learning, wellbeing and positive relationships can flourish.

Our aim is not simply to regulate technology but to promote responsible digital citizenship, encourage healthy habits, strengthen personal interaction and ensure that all pupils can fully engage in the educational opportunities and experiences that school life provides.

Aims of the Policy

The aims of this policy are to:

- Promote a safe, respectful and inclusive learning environment.
- Maximise opportunities for teaching, learning and academic achievement.
- Minimise distractions and interruptions during the school day.
- Support the wellbeing, mental health and social development of pupils.
- Safeguard pupils from risks associated with inappropriate use of technology.

- Encourage positive face-to-face relationships and engagement within the school community.
- Foster responsible, respectful and informed digital citizenship.
- Protect the privacy, dignity and rights of all members of the school community.
- Provide clear and consistent expectations for the use of mobile devices.
- Ensure compliance with Department of Education guidance and relevant safeguarding, behaviour and data protection requirements.

Overall this policy aims to support excellence in learning, promote pupil wellbeing and safeguarding, encourage responsible digital citizenship, protect the rights and privacy of all members of the school community, and provide a clear and consistent framework for the use of mobile devices throughout the school day.

Roles and Responsibilities

The safe and responsible use of mobile devices is a shared responsibility between governors, school leaders, staff, pupils and parents/carers. By working together, we can create a learning environment that prioritises educational excellence, wellbeing, safeguarding, respect and positive relationships, while equipping young people to navigate an increasingly digital world with confidence and responsibility.

Board of Governors

The Board of Governors is responsible for:

- Approving and supporting the implementation of the Mobile Device Policy.
- Ensuring the policy reflects current legislation, Department of Education guidance and best practice.
- Promoting a school culture that supports learning, wellbeing, safeguarding and responsible digital citizenship.
- Monitoring the effectiveness of the policy through regular review and reporting processes.
- Supporting school leaders in the consistent application of the policy.

Principal and Deputy Principals

The Principal and Deputy Principals are responsible for:

- Leading the implementation and oversight of the policy.
- Ensuring that staff, pupils and parents/carers are aware of the policy and their responsibilities within it.
- Promoting a consistent and fair approach to the application of the policy across the school.
- Providing guidance and support to staff in addressing issues relating to mobile device use.

- Monitoring emerging technologies, educational research and relevant guidance to inform policy review and development.
- Ensuring that any concerns relating to safeguarding, online safety or inappropriate use of mobile devices are addressed in accordance with school procedures.

Staff

All staff are responsible for:

- Modelling appropriate and professional use of technology.
- Promoting and reinforcing the expectations outlined in this policy.
- Supporting pupils to develop responsible digital behaviours.
- Challenging and responding appropriately to breaches of the policy.
- Reporting concerns in line with school safeguarding, behaviour and online safety procedures.
- Upholding safeguarding, privacy and data protection requirements.

Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Adhere to the requirements of this policy at all times.
- Use mobile devices responsibly, safely and respectfully.
- Support a positive learning environment by avoiding behaviours that distract from teaching and learning.
- Respect the privacy, dignity and rights of others.
- Report concerns relating to online safety, inappropriate use of technology or misuse of mobile devices.
- Accept responsibility for the safe and secure storage of their personal devices while in school.

Parents/Carers

Parents/Carers are expected to:

- Familiarise themselves with and support the school's Mobile Device Policy.
- Reinforce responsible digital behaviour at home and in the wider community.
- Support the school in addressing concerns or breaches of the policy.
- Use established school communication channels where contact with pupils is required during the school day.
- Encourage safe, respectful and age-appropriate use of technology.
- Work in partnership with the school to promote pupils' wellbeing, learning and online safety.

Expectations and Requirements for Mobile Device Use

The school recognises that many pupils carry mobile phones and other personal digital devices for use before and after the school day. However, in line with Department of Education guidance, the school adopts a **"Never Seen, Never Heard"** approach to the personal use of mobile devices during the school day.

The purpose of this approach is to support learning, minimise distractions, promote positive social interaction, safeguard pupils and staff, and maintain a respectful and purposeful educational environment.

General Expectations

Pupils who bring a mobile phone or other personal digital device to school must ensure that it:

- Is switched off before entering the school building.
- Remains switched off and out of sight throughout the school day, including registration, lesson time, movement between classes, assemblies, study periods, break and lunch.
- Is stored securely in a school bag or other appropriate location and not carried in a manner that makes it easily accessible for use.
- Is not used to make or receive calls, send or receive messages, access the internet, take photographs, make video or audio recordings, or access social media during the school day unless specifically authorised by a member of staff.
- Is used responsibly before and after the school day.

The school accepts no responsibility for the loss, theft or damage of personal mobile devices brought onto the school site.

Educational Use of Mobile Devices

The school recognises that, particularly at GCSE and A Level mobile devices may offer legitimate educational benefits.

At the discretion of a teacher or study supervisor, pupils may be permitted to use a mobile device for specific educational purposes, including:

- Coursework and controlled project work.
- Research activities.
- Photography or recording required for assessed coursework.
- Evidence gathering for practical subjects such as Technology and Design, Art and Design, Moving Image Arts and other relevant courses.
- Examination preparation and revision activities in supervised study periods.

In such circumstances:

- Permission must be explicitly granted by the supervising member of staff.
- Use must be directly related to the learning activity being undertaken.
- Pupils must follow all instructions given by staff.
- Staff will supervise the use of devices.
- Any misuse of this privilege will result in permission being withdrawn and may require the device to be handed in at the beginning of future lessons or study sessions.

Exceptions and Individual Arrangements

The school recognises that there may be exceptional circumstances where access to a mobile device during the school day is necessary to support a pupil's medical, safeguarding or special educational needs.

Permission for such arrangements may be granted by the Principal, Deputy Principal (Pastoral) or Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) following consultation with the pupil, parents/carers and, where appropriate, relevant professionals.

Where a pupil has an identified need that requires an exception to this policy:

- The agreed arrangements will be clearly documented within the pupil's Personal Learning Plan (PLP), Medical Care Plan or other relevant support plan.
- A record of the agreed exception will be maintained on SIMS.
- Relevant staff will be informed of the arrangements.
- The permission granted will be specific to the identified need and reviewed periodically to ensure it remains appropriate.
- Pupils are expected to use the device only in accordance with the agreed arrangements and purposes outlined in their support plan.

The school is committed to ensuring that the implementation of this policy is fair, inclusive and responsive to individual pupil needs while maintaining a safe and effective learning environment for all.

Communication During the School Day

If parents/carers need to contact their child during the school day, they should do so through the School Office.

Likewise, pupils who need to contact a parent/carer during the school day should seek permission to do so through a member of staff and use appropriate school procedures or ask the School Office to contact home.

Photography, Video and Audio Recording

To protect the privacy, dignity and safeguarding of all members of the school community:

- Pupils must not take photographs, videos or audio recordings of any person on school premises or during school activities (including trips) without the explicit permission of a member of staff.
- Images, recordings or online content relating to pupils, staff or the school must not be created, stored, shared or distributed without appropriate permission.
- Any misuse of technology of this nature will be treated as a serious disciplinary matter and may be addressed under the school's Safeguarding, Anti-Bullying, Behaviour and Online Safety policies.

Examinations and Assessments

Pupils must comply fully with school and examination board regulations regarding mobile phones and other electronic devices.

Mobile phones, smart watches and other unauthorised communication devices must not be brought into examination rooms or assessment venues unless specifically permitted by examination regulations.

Failure to comply with examination regulations may result in disciplinary action and could constitute examination malpractice.

Responding to Breaches of the Policy

First Occasion (within one term)

Where a mobile device is seen, heard or used during the school day without permission:

- The pupil will receive a warning.
- The incident will be recorded on SIMS.
- The pupil will be reminded of the expectations of this policy.

Second Occasion (within one term)

Where a mobile device is again seen, heard or used during the school day without permission:

- The device will be confiscated by a member of staff.
- The device will be securely stored in the School Office.
- The incident will be recorded on SIMS.
- The pupil will collect the device at the end of the school day from the Deputy Principal (Pastoral), or in their absence the other Deputy Principal or the Principal.
- As part of this process, the pupil will be expected to provide assurance that the expectations of the policy will be followed in future.

Repeated Breaches

Where concerns persist:

- Parents/carers will be informed.
- Appropriate pastoral interventions and sanctions will be implemented in line with the school's Positive Behaviour Policy.
- An individual support and monitoring plan may be agreed with the pupil and parents/carers.

This may include:

- The phone being handed into the School Office at the start of each day.
- The phone being handed into a teacher at the start of each lesson or study period.
- A graduated period during which the pupil is not permitted to bring a mobile phone to school.
- Additional pastoral support, mentoring or monitoring arrangements.
- Other sanctions or interventions deemed appropriate under the Positive Behaviour Policy.

Serious Misuse

The school views certain uses of mobile devices as particularly serious.

Examples include:

- Cyberbullying, intimidation, harassment or threatening behaviour.
- Taking, possessing or sharing photographs, videos or recordings without permission.

- Recording staff or pupils without authorisation.
- Accessing inappropriate, offensive or harmful online material.
- Using devices in a manner that compromises safeguarding.
- Circumventing school filtering, monitoring or behaviour systems.
- Any activity which may constitute a criminal offence.

Such incidents will be dealt with under the school's disciplinary and safeguarding procedures and, where appropriate, may be referred to external agencies including the PSNI.

Relevant School Policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with the school's:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Positive Behaviour Policy
- Addressing Bullying Behaviour Policy
- E-Communication and Acceptable Use Policy
- Special Educational Needs Policy
- GDPR Policy

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed biannually to ensure that it remains effective, relevant and aligned with the school's values and aims.

The policy may also be reviewed and updated at any time in response to:

- Changes in legislation, statutory requirements or Department of Education guidance.
- Developments in safeguarding, data protection or online safety practice.
- Emerging research and evidence relating to the impact of mobile devices and digital technology on children and young people's learning, wellbeing and development.
- Significant changes in technology or patterns of mobile device use.
- Feedback from pupils, parents/carers, staff and governors.
- Issues arising from the implementation of the policy.

Regular review will help ensure that the school's approach remains informed, balanced and responsive to the evolving digital landscape and the needs of the school community.

Review Date – April 2028

Appendix 1:

Relevant Guidance, Legislation and Resources

This policy has been informed by current Department of Education guidance, safeguarding requirements, data protection legislation and research relating to the use of mobile devices by children and young people. The following documents and organisations may provide further information and support.

Department of Education (Northern Ireland)

- Circular 2024/14 – Guidance for Schools on Pupils' Personal Use of Mobile Phones and Other Similar Devices During the School Day
    - https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/circular-202414-guidance-schools-pupils-personal-use-mobile-phones-and-other-similar-devices-during

Education Authority Northern Ireland (EA)

- Children and Young People's Services
    - https://www.eani.org.uk
- Online Safety Resources
    - https://www.eani.org.uk/parents/inclusion-and-wellbeing/e-safety

Safeguarding and Online Safety

- Safer Schools NI
    - https://saferschoolsni.co.uk
- UK Safer Internet Centre
    - https://saferinternet.org.uk
- Childnet International
    - https://www.childnet.com
- CEOP Education (Child Exploitation and Online Protection)
    - https://www.ceopeducation.co.uk

Data Protection and Privacy

- Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)
    - https://ico.org.uk
- UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
    - https://www.legislation.gov.uk

Appendix 2:

Research Summary and Rationale

This policy has been developed in response to evolving technology, changing patterns of mobile device use among young people, and increasing evidence regarding the impact of personal devices on learning, wellbeing and social interaction.

The Department of Education Northern Ireland advises that the personal use of mobile phones and similar devices should be restricted during the school day for the vast majority of pupils. The Department's guidance highlights concerns regarding distraction from learning, the negative impact on concentration and engagement, cyberbullying, exposure to harmful online content, reduced social interaction and the effect of excessive device use on children's wellbeing and development.

Learning and Academic Achievement

Research and educational guidance indicate that unrestricted access to mobile phones during the school day can:

- Distract pupils from learning and reduce concentration.
- Interrupt teaching and learning.
- Reduce engagement in classroom activities.
- Affect academic performance and achievement.
- Increase opportunities for off-task behaviour during lessons and study periods.

Limiting personal mobile phone use during the school day can help create a more focused learning environment and maximise opportunities for academic success.

Wellbeing and Social Development

Schools have an important role in supporting the emotional wellbeing and healthy social development of young people.

Evidence referenced within Department of Education guidance highlights concerns relating to:

- Excessive screen time.
- Sleep disruption.
- Online bullying and peer conflict.
- Anxiety linked to constant connectivity and social media use.
- Reduced face-to-face communication and social interaction.

Restricting personal device use during the school day can encourage pupils to engage more fully with their peers, participate in school life and develop positive relationships.

Safeguarding and Privacy

Mobile devices provide access to communication, photography, recording and internet-based services. While these technologies can be beneficial, they may also create safeguarding and privacy risks if misused.

Potential concerns include:

- Unauthorised photography, video or audio recording.
- Cyberbullying and online harassment.
- Access to inappropriate or harmful content.
- Sharing of personal information.
- Misuse of social media platforms.
- Breaches of privacy affecting pupils, staff and visitors.

The school therefore seeks to promote a culture of responsible, respectful and safe digital behaviour.

A Balanced Approach

The school recognises that mobile devices can offer legitimate educational benefits, particularly for older pupils engaged in GCSE and GCE courses. The policy does not prohibit pupils from owning or bringing phones to school. Instead, it establishes clear expectations regarding when and how devices may be used.

The school's **"Never Seen, Never Heard"** approach seeks to balance:

- Educational excellence.
- Pupil wellbeing.
- Safeguarding responsibilities.
- Responsible digital citizenship.
- Individual pupil needs.
- Appropriate educational use of technology.

This approach reflects current Department of Education guidance while recognising the realities of modern life and the importance of preparing young people to use technology responsibly and effectively.

Commitment to Review

The school is committed to ensuring that this policy remains evidence-informed and responsive to the needs of pupils and the wider school community. As research, technology and legislation continue to develop, the policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure that it reflects current best practice and promotes the best outcomes for all pupils.

Appendix 3:

Educational Use of Mobile Devices at GCSE and A Level.

The school recognises that mobile devices can, in certain circumstances, support teaching, learning and independent study, particularly at GCSE and A Level.

This appendix outlines the circumstances in which a teacher or study supervisor may authorise the use of mobile devices for educational purposes.

Authorised educational use is an exception to the school's **"Never Seen, Never Heard"** approach and is a privilege that may be withdrawn where expectations are not met.

Authorised Use

A teacher or study supervisor may permit pupils to use a mobile device for:

- Curriculum-based research activities.
- GCSE and GCE coursework.
- Project-based learning.
- Photography or video evidence required for assessed work.
- Subject-specific activities.
- Revision and examination preparation.
- Supervised study periods.
- Educational visits and fieldwork activities.

Examples may include:

- Photographing design and manufacturing processes in Technology and Design.
- Recording evidence of practical work.
- Capturing images for Art and Design portfolios.
- Producing digital content for Moving Image Arts.
- Accessing approved revision resources during supervised study sessions.
- Completing directed research tasks specified by a member of staff.

Expectations During Authorised Use

Where permission has been granted:

- The mobile device must be used only for the purpose identified by the teacher or study supervisor.
- Pupils must follow all instructions given by staff.
- The use of social media, messaging services, gaming, streaming services or any non-educational application is prohibited.
- Pupils must not photograph or record other pupils or members of staff without permission.
- Pupils must respect copyright, privacy and data protection requirements.
- The device must be switched off and put away immediately when instructed to do so.

Staff Responsibilities

Staff authorising the use of mobile devices should:

- Ensure that the educational purpose is clear.
- Provide appropriate supervision.
- Monitor pupil use throughout the activity.
- Intervene promptly where misuse occurs.
- Ensure the activity complies with safeguarding and data protection requirements.

Withdrawal of Permission

Educational use of mobile devices is a privilege and not an entitlement.

If a pupil misuses a mobile device during an authorised activity:

- The pupil may be instructed to stop using the device immediately.
- The teacher may require the device to be handed in for the remainder of the lesson or study period.
- The incident may be recorded on SIMS.
- Parents/carers may be informed where appropriate.
- Future permission to use a mobile device for educational purposes may be withdrawn.

Repeated misuse may result in further sanctions and interventions in accordance with the school's Positive Behaviour Policy.

The school's expectation remains that mobile devices are **"Never Seen, Never Heard"** during the school day unless permission has been granted by a member of staff for a specific educational purpose.