



St. Joseph's Community College
Charlestown, Co. Mayo.

Mobile Phone Pouch Policy

1. Introduction

Schools play a vital role in promoting wellbeing and mental health by equipping children and young people with the knowledge, skills, and competencies to deal with the challenges that may impact on their wellbeing.

It is recognised that technology is ever evolving and increasingly part of everyday life. However, excessive mobile phone use, and screen time generally, can have a detrimental impact on students' concentration and academic performance. Ensuring that students are not using their mobile phone for personal use during the school day can help to address these issues and foster an environment more conducive to learning, as well as supporting in-person engagement with their peers.

While the school already had measures in place to restrict the personal use of mobile phones, in compliance with the Department of Education and Youth Circular 0045/2025, the school will now have a consistent approach to ensure a restriction is implemented for the duration of the school day.

The policy to restrict the use of phones by students during the school day will enable the school to provide a phone-free environment, to support students' wellbeing, concentration, academic performance and development. It will provide a space for students to disconnect from their online world and will assist in supporting them to become less dependent on their mobile phones. This policy applies to mobile phones. Smart watches, smart glasses or any other smart device which can be used to send and receive messages are not permitted in the school in any circumstance.

The aim of this policy is to, firstly, protect the welfare, well-being and safety of all within our school community and, secondly, to provide an environment that is conducive to excellent teaching and learning.

2. Rationale

St. Joseph's Community College recognises that mobile phones and personal smart devices are now an integral part of young people's lives and that they can have considerable value when used appropriately. However, in a school setting, it has been our experience that mobile phones and personal smart devices can prevent effective teaching and learning from taking place and inhibit the social development of students. Additionally, instances of inappropriate photographing/videoing of members of the school community and inappropriate communications via social media apps can heighten anxiety and stress levels amongst our students and in some severe cases this can lead to incidents of bullying.

As an ETB school, the ETBI Patrons' Framework on Ethos underpins all policies and practices in St. Joseph's Community College. It informs the values promoted in our school, how the formal and hidden curricula are delivered, and the nature of the relationships within our school. As such, St. Joseph's Community College is committed to and underpinned by the core values of:

- Excellent in Education
- Care
- Respect
- Equality
- Community



In particular, this policy is informed by the core values of excellence in education, care and respect, where the welfare, wellbeing and safety of the entire school community must be respected and cared for in order to create an environment that is supportive of excellent teaching and learning.

3. Links to Other Policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies and legislation.

Code of Behaviour

Bí-Cinnealta Anti-Bullying Policy

Acceptable Internet Use Policy

Education Act, 1998

Education (Welfare) Act, 2000

4. Aims of the Policy

The aims of this policy are to:

1. Provide clarity to students, staff and parents and ensure that students are not using their mobile phones for personal use during the school day.
2. Promote positive student interaction and enhance the wellbeing of all members of our school community.

3. Foster an environment (a) to support more in-person engagement with peers and (b) that is more conducive to learning.
4. Support a safe, nurturing environment where the personal dignity and rights of all members of the school community are preserved.
5. Continue to provide for a school environment that is free from the threat of invasion of privacy for all members of our school community.
6. Support our Code of Behaviour, Bí Cinealta policy and associated policies by discouraging cyberbullying in all its forms.

5. Pouches

For the 2026/2027 academic year, St. Joseph's Community College will be a mobile phone/personal smart device free zone during the school day. This includes smart phones/watches, ear pods and personal tablets etc.

To assist in the implementation of our mobile phone policy, the college has invested in pouches funded by the Department of Education and Youth. All students in the school will be given a pouch free of charge.

The pouch will be the responsibility of each student to look after the pouch carefully, use it for the safe and secure storage of their phone and return the pouch lies with the student, supported by their parents/guardians. The school accepts no responsibility for loss or damage to mobile phones taken into school.

Each pouch will be marked with a unique identifier code, and a record will be kept of each student's code. Students must return the pouch they were assigned at the end of their time at St. Joseph's Community College.

6. Daily Procedure

On entering the school grounds, students will be required to turn their phone off and place it in their pouch, where it will remain until the end of the school day.

Phones may not remain connected to any other smart devices such as smart watches, ear pods, headphones or smart glasses.

Regular checks and inspections will be undertaken during the school day, and students must present their locked pouch to any member of the school staff when directed to do so.

The pouches remain locked throughout the day for all students, and they can only be unlocked at the end of the school day using one of the designated unlocking stations in the school.

Pouch Ownership

Pouches are given on loan to students free of charge but remain the property of the college. Any loss of or damage to the phone pouch or failure to return the phone pouch to the school at the end of the academic year will incur a charge of €25 to the parents/guardians to provide for a replacement pouch.

Medical Issues and Exemptions

For students requiring regular access to their mobile phone for medical reasons e.g. monitoring blood sugar, an adapted phone pouch is available upon receipt of a consultant's letter detailing the reason for the required access.

School staff will be notified of any student possessing an adapted phone pouch.

Students who do not bring a Phone to School

In the event that a student does not have parental permission to bring their phone to school, the parent/guardian must inform the Principal /Deputy Principal in writing of this fact.

Students who are over 18 years of age and who do not wish to bring their mobile phone to school must provide this information in writing to the Principal/Deputy Principal.

Failure to present a phone pouch without a letter from a parent / guardian the incident will be reported to the year head & the year head will notify the parents / guardian.

In the case of a repeated breach the parent / guardian will be notified by the year head & the student will serve a detention.

In the case there is a repeated breach the parent / guardian will be notified, and the student will be suspended from school.

Late or early departure

Students arriving late or being signed out by a parent/guardian must lock/unlock their pouches at the school office.

School Assessments and State Examinations

As per the State/school examinations rules, no mobile phones/personal smart devices are allowed in an examination centre.

Mobile phones should be left in pouches during house examinations and assessments.

Damaged or Lost Pouches

The mobile phone pouch is the property of the school. Any loss or damage to the pouch will result in the student being required to purchase a new one for €25. Examples of damage include ripped/cut/torn fabric, bent/cut pin, signs of force to the button on flap, the pouch opening without the unlocking station etc. This list is not exhaustive.

The school management's decision about what constitutes unusable shall be binding.

Students responsible for graffiti or other purposeful damage to their own, or other student's device pouches, will be liable for sanction and full payment of a new pouch.

Students will be expected to notify the school immediately in the case of accidental damage done to the pouch. If any damage is identified when a pouch is being checked by a member of staff, it will be considered intentional unless the student has reported it previously. To avoid accidental damage, students must keep pouches closed after retrieving their phone at the end of the day.

It is the student's responsibility to keep their pouch containing their phone in a safe and secure location. It is most important that phones pouches are not left unattended in school bags. St. Joseph's Community College accept no responsibility for lost, stolen or damaged mobile phones and personal smart devices such as smart watches and ear pods.

Forgotten Pouches

Students will not be permitted to attend class without their mobile phone pouch. If a student forgets their phone pouch, their phone must be handed into the office for the day. It can be collected at the end of the day.

Repeated instances will require the purchase of a new pouch.

Parental Contact

All communication during the school day between parents/guardians and the school must take place through our school office via the Tyro app, email or the office phone (094 92 54211).

Students are free to call their parents from the front office at any time.

Students who wish to sign out of school early, will do so in the usual fashion (via the Tyro app) and must be collected by parents/guardians at the school reception desk. Office staff will release their phone from the pouch when students are signing out.

After school Activities/trips/tours

For school excursions and trips, students should have their phone secured in the phone pouch for the bus journey. Upon arrival at the destination, the accompanying teacher may unlock the phone pouch using the portable unlocking device, to allow students to access their phone for a set period of time. Phones must be secured in the phone pouch upon return to the bus.

Phones may be unlocked for the following reasons:

1. For health and safety purposes.
2. To contact parents/guardians to arrange pick up spots and times.
3. At the direction and under the supervision of a staff member for educational classroom purposes.
4. On trips and tours where students have time for sightseeing, shopping etc. and may need their phone to contact teachers / staff members who are supervising the trip /tour or other students in their group.

If a student is using their mobile phone while on a school tour/activity, they must do so in an appropriate and responsible manner. Students should be mindful of other students/staff/members of the public when taking photos/videos and always respect the privacy rights of others.

Sanctions

The following sanctions will apply;

Any deliberate attempt to try to contravene or not comply with this policy will be regarded as a serious breach of the code of behaviour and will result in a suspension from school.

If a student is found to be using and/or in possession of a mobile phone out of the pouch during the school day, without permission, the mobile phone will be confiscated and stored until the end of the school day.

Any device confiscated by staff members will write the details on a labelled envelope and send it to the Secretary's office, or to the Deputy Principal or Principal if the office is closed. No responsibility will be taken for loss or damage to the same. The staff member will then record the confiscation on Tyro.

Refusal to allow confiscation of the device will be treated as a serious breach of the Code of Behaviour. The student will be sent immediately to the Principal/Deputy Principal's office at such time the students parent/guardian will be contacted to collect the phone, and the student will also be suspended for the following school day.

If a student brings a second mobile phone to school, in addition to the phone placed in their phone pouch (or in place of a confiscated mobile phone), both phones will be confiscated. Thereafter, the student will be suspended from school.

Should the student be involved in a repeat offence, a longer suspension may be imposed, and before returning to school, the student, together with a parent/guardian will be required to meet with the Deputy Principal or Principal to discuss the matter.

Level 1: First Breach

The mobile phone will be confiscated and placed in an envelope until the end of the school day. Students will collect the phone from the office at 4pm Monday-Thursday, or 1.10pm Friday.

Level 2: Second Breach

The mobile phone will be confiscated until the end of the day. Placed in an envelope and stored in the office. The student will serve a lunch time detention on a Thursday.

Level 3: Third Breach

Phone will be confiscated. Student will serve a suspension in line with the code of behaviour and a support plan will be put in place.

Persistent breached May result in in – school suspension in line with the code of behaviour.

Serious Breaches

Filming, cyberbullying, refusal to surrender a mobile phone.



Chairperson, BOM SJCC



Secretary, BOM SJCC

Date: 17/09/2026

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