



Mobile Phone Policy

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Adopted date:	January 2025
Review date:	June 2029

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Mobile Phone Policy

Introduction

This policy has been formulated after consultation with a selection of staff, students and parents/guardians from Bangor Academy. This policy should be read in conjunction with Department of Education guidance (see Appendix), and with other school policies:

- Anti-bullying Policy
- Behaviour for Learning Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- ICT Policy
- Examination Policy

Rationale

Bangor Academy recognises that mobile phones have become an intrinsic part of everyday life. Google Classroom has become an essential aspect of our educational provision and therefore access to the internet is vital. For many the phone is the first and most accessible means of partaking in online activities and work.

However, research has confirmed that mobile phones directly impact the ability of a pupil to concentrate in school. Also, children sometimes lack the maturity to use it safely and responsibly.

To this end we offer guidance on how mobile phones can and should be used in school. The duty of care for each and every child in the school is paramount, along with our continued focus on academic success, therefore this policy will attempt to weigh the balance between child protection and safe use of mobile phones in the school.

Purpose

- to inform staff, students and parents/guardians about acceptable and appropriate mobile phone use in school.
- to highlight the child protection issues of using smart phones in school.
- to eliminate the use of text messaging and/or social media communications in school as a form of bullying.
- to offer safety guidelines to the students on general mobile phone use.
- to raise awareness of mobile phones and external examination policy.
- to outline the possible consequences of not adhering to our mobile phone policy.

Mobile Phone Use in School:

Students

- Students are permitted to carry mobile phones into school.
- Students may use mobile phones at the following times: up to 8.50am each morning, at break and lunch time, and on the way home after classes and/or clubs have finished.
- Students must not use their phone to bully others. Doing so will result in sanctions in line with our 'Behaviour for Learning' and 'Anti-Bullying' policies.
- Students must not contact parents/guardians directly to arrange collection from school. Correct procedures for leaving school should be followed.

Students - During Lessons

- Each classroom has a phone storage box. Upon entering the classroom each pupil must place their phone into the storage box. The box will remain visible at the front of the room throughout the lesson. Phones should be switched off or put to silent mode during lessons.
- Students may be exempt from this should there be a verified and acceptable reason why they must be contactable or need to have their phone on them, for example a medical purpose.
- Students may, on occasions, use their phones in class for educational purposes. This is at the discretion of the teacher and permission should be sought prior to the phone being used.
- At the end of each lesson, pupils should collect their phone from the box before leaving for their next lesson.

Staff

- Teachers should only use their mobile phones for personal use when they are not in charge of a class.
- Teachers may use phones in class if they are part of the lesson being delivered.
- Staff should not share or exchange personal phone numbers with pupils or parents of pupils. (apart from family members)
- Staff should ensure they have appropriate/adequate insurance cover for their phone in the event of loss/damage/theft.

Parents/guardians

- Parents/guardians need to recognise that they are responsible for their child's safe use of a mobile phone.
- Parents/guardians should avoid making direct contact with their young person by mobile phone during the school day unless absolutely necessary.
- If parents/guardians need to make urgent contact, they should phone school reception on 02891270535 and school will take appropriate action.
- Parents/guardians should ensure that they have taken out adequate insurance cover in the event of loss/damage/theft of their young person's phone.
- Parents/guardians should not ask/expect staff to share or exchange personal phone numbers with them.

Sanctions that may be used by teachers for mobile phone misuse or in the instance that a pupil refuses to comply with the mobile phone policy:

Please note: any interaction between teacher and pupil that damages teaching and learning time based on a pupil's refusal to cooperate is unacceptable. Teaching and learning time is paramount and pupils should not negatively impact this with a basic failure to comply. The following steps provide a framework for staff and pupils to work within however the situation may be escalated more quickly should any member of staff be faced with unacceptable levels of defiance to the detriment of their ability to teach the other members of the class.

- Verbal warning: the pupil should be informed that refusal to comply with the phone policy will result in an escalation of sanctions. Every effort should be made to allow the pupil to make the best decision and to comply. The teacher should record phone misuse on behaviour management in SIMS.
- If the pupil continues to refuse to comply, their poor decision will lead to the removal of and safe keeping of their phone for a short period of the day. The phone will be returned to the student so long as the student cooperates with the teacher regarding the temporary removal. The teacher reserves the right to decide on the time frame based on an improvement in behaviour, but the time frame can be no longer than the end of the school day. This should be managed within the subject department.
- NB: Substitute/student teachers who are faced with disciplinary issues regarding phones in their class should **not** take the phone from the student but refer the student to HoD/HoY or SLT.
- Where a pupil fails to comply on multiple occasions across a week or term, a teacher should issue a sanction, for example a break time detention, which can be escalated to after school should the behaviour continue.

Serious misuse of mobile phone and/or blatant or continuous defiance in failing to comply with the school mobile phone policy.

- Mobile phones will be confiscated by a member of the Senior Leadership Team, from students who regularly or seriously misuse their phone in school and/or blatantly refuse to comply with the policy. The phone will be confiscated during the school day but returned at the end of the day.
- The pupil may no longer be allowed to bring their phone to school for a period of time or a further punishment may be administered, in line with the Behaviour for Learning' policy, depending on the gravity of the situation. In instances such as this the parent will be contacted.
- Serious inappropriate use of mobile phones that breach child protection thresholds will result in external agencies/authorities being involved, such as the PSNI. For further information on this please refer to the Child Protection Policy.

Child Protection Issues

Under no circumstances is any student permitted to take a photo/video/sound recording on the school premises without first obtaining permission of the subject of the photo/video/sound recording.

- Any student found to be uploading content to the internet depicting the school's brand, or involving children in school uniform, or involving staff members will be the subject of a disciplinary enquiry.
- The school reserves the right to suspend or expel a student for this action.
- Serious inappropriate use of mobile phones may result in external agencies/authorities being involved.
- It is an offence for a child (under 18) to send or receive images of a sexual nature. School is obliged to inform the PSNI in the event of inappropriate sexual images being shared.

Safe Use of Mobile Phones

Pupils will be offered the following advice in school:

- Only give your number or social media details to close friends and family you can trust.
- Don't give your mobile number to someone you don't know.
- Don't reply to any nasty messages you receive.
- Don't send pictures to someone you don't know
- Don't reply to a text from someone you don't know.
- Don't answer calls from withheld numbers or numbers you don't recognize.
- Block numbers from people who are sending you nasty messages.

How to Seek Support in the Event of Cyber Bullying

Pupils will be offered the following advice in school:

Remember if you are being bullied it isn't your fault and there is nothing so awful that you can't speak to someone about it. Talk to a trusted adult at home or at school.

- Report to a member of staff if someone has taken, sent or received a picture/video/sound recording of you in school without your consent.
- Report to a trusted adult if you receive any text message/image/communication which is offensive to you. It is best you do not delete this text or picture or video or sound recording until you have shown it to an adult.
- If the problem is serious you can also report it to any member of staff, the police or Childline.

Mobile Phones and External Examination Policy

- The use of mobile phones is strictly prohibited in the examination hall.
- For external examinations the phone should be left at home but if brought to school it must be switched off and handed in prior to entering the exam hall.
- According to exam regulations, if students are found with mobile phones in the exam hall, they will be disqualified from that exam.
- A reminder and the details of procedures is gone over with students in the lead up to exams.
- For further information please refer to the Examination Policy.

Advice to Parents/guardians

1. Accidental damage

- Bangor Academy does not accept responsibility for damage to, nor loss of, a mobile phone regardless of the circumstance.

2. Parent/guardian support

- School would appreciate the support of parents/guardians in the implementation of our phone policy, particularly in classrooms. Parents should recognise the intention of increasing classroom focus and academic outcomes.
- School encourages all parents to monitor their child's use of mobile phones and educate them on what is and is not appropriate material to have on their phone relative to age and maturity.
- There are many places where parents/guardians can find advice. Bangor Academy recommends that every parent downloads the 'SaferSchools' app. It is rich with information regarding the safe use of mobile phones. See Appendix 2.

3. Pupil safety

- It is very important that school knows where pupils are after they have been entrusted to our care on a daily basis.
- It causes distress and disruption if pupils do not adhere to procedures for leaving school and go 'missing'. Therefore, please stress to your child that they must not use their phone to contact someone to collect them from school.
- If a pupil feels ill or needs to leave for an appointment they should speak to staff first and then school will make the necessary arrangements if collection is required. Pupils must be signed out at reception.
- If there is an emergency situation in school parents/guardians will be contacted.
- If there is an emergency situation at home, parents/guardians should contact school on (028) 9127 0535 and we will arrange for the pupil to be contacted immediately.

APPENDIX

1. Department of Education guidance: Issued on 3rd September 2024
<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/education/Circular%202024-14%20-%20Use%20of%20Personal%20Mobile%20Phones.pdf>

2. Safer Schools App

Parents of children at Bangor Academy should download the 'SaferSchools' app. It is packed with relevant information for parents to help them understand the latest trends and apps on your child's phone. It also offers guidance on using parental restrictions to ensure your child will only access age-appropriate material.

The following letter will be sent to every parent at the beginning of every academic year.

Dear Parent,

I am writing to inform you of two new resources available for parents and young people about Safeguarding and Child Protection issues that we are facing in society today.



The first is an app called 'Safer Schools NI'. This app provides a range of useful articles for you to be kept up to date with the latest apps/websites/social media platforms that young people are using. It also gives good advice about the safety and privacy settings within these platforms as well as general information on the latest trends that are happening online.

All of this has been designed to help parents keep up with the challenges of the internet and to help you do all you can to keep young people safe.

The Safer Schools NI app is free to download from the Apple App store or Google Play store. Simply visit the store and search "Safer Schools NI"

The following steps will apply to all parents or carers using the Safer Schools NI App?

These steps will apply to all parents and carers.

Firstly, as an adult user, you'll need to start by creating an account. We do **not** require the children to do this due to GDPR compliance. Your account is used to allow you to utilise the features within the App.

STEP 1 - Open the Safer Schools NI App. Select that you are a Staff or Parent/Carer.

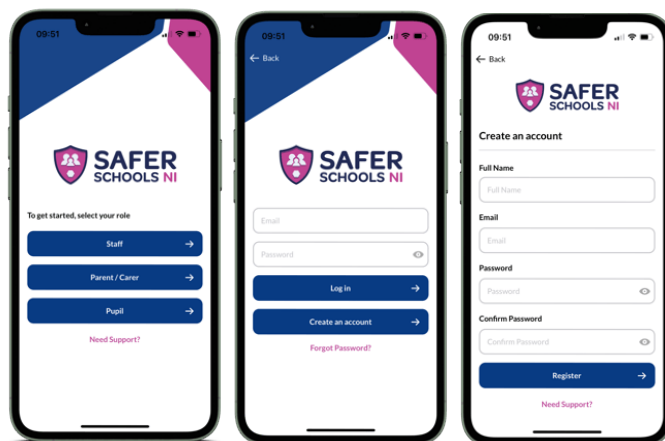
Note If you are both a parent for a child in one school, and a member of staff in another, you're able to add both roles for both schools to your account. It doesn't matter if you choose staff or parent when you create your account.

STEP 2 - You'll now be prompted for an email address and password. If this is your first time, select '**Create an Account**' in the box underneath the log in bar. Enter your name, use an email address you have access to and create a password. This could be your personal email address or a school one if you're a teacher.

STEP 3 - Once filled, click '**Register**'. You'll then see a terms and conditions pop-up.

Note: You'll need to scroll down to highlight the **Agree** button. Once it's highlighted, you can click it. If you do not scroll down, you will not be able to continue.

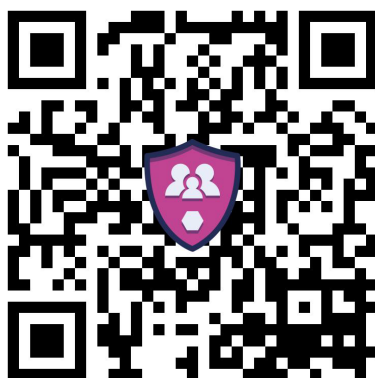
Once this has been agreed to, your new account has been created and you'll be directed to the 'Add School Or Roles' page.



Note: These are the details you will use whenever you need to log in. **Forgotten your password?** Not a problem! [Head to our article here to find out how to reset it.](#)

STEP 4: Now you're logged in, we need to add your role or roles. This corresponds to your role within the school community. Once you've logged in for the first time, you'll be prompted to 'Add School'.

Please see below the **QR Code and Entry Code** which is unique to our school.



Entry Code:
6783

Parent/Carer Post-Primary
Bangor Academy and Sixth Form
College

Note All content is age and role appropriate, so as a parent you may see slightly different features or content, or have different capabilities than you do as a staff member.

Once you have the relevant one, enter the code or scan the QR code. You will then immediately be logged in to the corresponding role. These roles will be stored on your account until such a time as you need to remove them.

Note The **Scan QR code** option will open an in App camera to scan it with. This is the one that **must** be used otherwise it will not work.



The second is an online hub that has been created by the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland. It has been brought forward under the Executive's "*Keeping Children and Young People Safe: An Online Safety Strategy*" led by the Department of Health. Here you will find other resources of a similar nature that guide and advise young people and parents. It includes some useful videos and articles that have been designed for particular age groups that can guide you and your children through some of the latest safeguarding issues young people are facing.

This online hub can be accessed by clicking on the following link.

<https://onlinesafetyhub.safeguardingni.org/>

I know that you will find these resources helpful and informative. If you have any difficulties in accessing them or if you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. Withers'.

Mr Withers

Vice Principal

Inclusion and accessibility statement

This policy applies to all pupils in Bangor Academy and Sixth Form College. We at Bangor Academy and Sixth Form College are committed to inclusion and supplying all our school publications in an accessible format.

Should any pupil parent or carer require support in interpreting or understanding this policy school will provide guidance in partnership with the Inclusion and Diversity Service.

If you require this document in an alternative format, such as large print or a coloured background, please contact us on policies@bangoracademy.org.uk