

St. Columba's College Stranorlar



Mobile Phone and Digital Device Policy

November 2025

Contents

1. Introduction and Rationale	2
1.1 Mission Statement and Ethos	2
1.2 Rationale	2
1.3 Aims of the Policy	2
2. Scope and Definitions	3
2.1 Scope	3
2.2 Definition of "Personal Mobile Phone/Digital Device"	3
3. Policy Statement: The Full Ban and Secure Storage	3
3.1 Allocation of Pouches	3
3.2 Procedures for the Use of Phone Pouches	4
3.3 Prohibited Actions	5
4. Emergency Communication and Exemptions	5
4.1 Emergency Communication (Home to Student)	5
4.2 Emergency Communication (Student to Home)	5
4.3 Exemptions (Medical / SEN)	6
5. Relationship to Other Policies and Sanctions	6
5.1 Relationship to Other Policies	6
5.2 Responsibility and Liability	6
5.3 Breaches of Policy and Disciplinary Action	7
6. Ratification and Review	8
6.1 Implementation of Policy	8
6.2 Review of Policy	8
Appendix 1 - Student Declaration & Parent/Guardian Declaration	9

1. Introduction and Rationale

1.1 Mission Statement and Ethos

St. Columba's College is a Mercy Catholic Voluntary Secondary School under CEIST and is committed to '**The pursuit of excellence in a caring environment.**' This policy is guided by our ethos to create a safe, respectful, and effective learning environment for all members of the school community.

1.2 Rationale

This policy is created in response to Department of Education circulars regarding the use of personal mobile phones and digital devices in secondary schools. Growing evidence suggests that personal mobile phones negatively impact student **well-being, concentration, and academic performance**. The use of devices also increases the risk of **cyberbullying** and exposure to **inappropriate content** during school hours.

1.3 Aims of the Policy

This policy aims to:

- **Enhance Teaching & Learning:** Eliminate all distractions caused by personal devices, thereby creating a more focused and productive learning environment in all classrooms and school areas.
- **Promote Student Well-being:** Reduce the pressure and anxiety associated with constant digital connectivity, and reduce the potential for social exclusion or bullying.
- **Foster Positive Social Interaction:** Encourage students to engage in face-to-face socialisation, physical activity, and traditional play during non-class times (break and lunch).
- **Clarify Expectations:** Clearly define the roles and responsibilities of students, staff, and parents/guardians regarding mobile phone possession and secure storage on school premises.

2. Scope and Definitions

2.1 Scope

This policy applies to **all students** of St. Columba's College and covers the use and access of personal mobile phones and similar electronic devices **for the entire duration of the school day**. The school day is defined as the time a student enters the school grounds in the morning until the final bell of the school day. This policy also applies during all school-related activities, including extracurricular clubs, sports events, and school trips, unless otherwise instructed by school management.

2.2 Definition of "Personal Mobile Phone/Digital Device"

This includes:

- **Mobile Phones:** All smartphones and basic/older-style mobile phones.
- **Smartwatches:** Devices that replicate mobile phone functionality, including making calls, sending messages, or accessing the internet.
- **Electronic Devices:** Tablets (iPads, etc.), personal music players (iPods), handheld gaming consoles, and personal listening devices (earphones, AirPods, etc.).

3. Policy Statement: The Full Ban and Secure Storage

Personal mobile phones and all defined digital devices are strictly prohibited from being used or accessed by students during the school day, including at morning break and lunchtime.

3.1 Allocation of Pouches

To implement the full ban, the school is introducing a system of lockable phone pouches that will remain sealed until the end of the school day.

The secure pouches will be distributed to students free of charge for the duration of their time in the college. If students lose the pouch, parents/guardians must replace at the cost set by the supplier.

Students are encouraged to keep their pouches safe and free from damage. Damaged pouches must also be replaced.

3.2 Procedures for the Use of Phone Pouches

1. **Entry to School:** Students are permitted to have their mobile phone/device on their person only while travelling to and from school.
2. **Storage of Phones in Pouches:** Upon arrival to the school grounds at the beginning of the school day, each student must:
 - **Power off** their mobile phone/device.
 - Place the powered-off device into their assigned personal security pouch.
 - Seal the pouch using the locking mechanism.
 - If a student **forgets their pouch**, they must leave their phone in a Deputy Principal's / Principal's office for the duration of the school day.
3. **No Access:** The pouch is **not** to be opened or tampered with by the student for any reason during the school day, including during breaks or when moving between classes. **The phone must remain silent and sealed in the pouch for the entire school day.**
4. **Unsealing (End of Day):** At the end of the final class, students will unseal the pouch using the designated unlocking device.
5. **Exit:** Students may power on and use their device **only once they have left the school premises.**
 - If students are leaving school early and will not be returning, e.g. for an appointment, they must present to the Deputy Principal's / Principal's office to have the pouch unsealed.
 - When students are away on extracurricular activities and arrive back to school before the end of the school day, they will unlock their pouches in the normal way.
 - When students arrive back after the end of the school day, the supervising teacher will unseal the pouches once they arrive back at the college.

3.3 Prohibited Actions

Students are **not permitted** to:

- Have a personal device on their person (pockets, coat, etc.) once the morning procedure is complete.
- Attempt to access or use a device, even if on silent/vibrate, at any time during the school day.
- Attempt to break, force, unseal, or tamper with the designated security pouch or container.
- Film, photograph, or record audio of any student or staff member while on school premises without explicit prior written consent from the Principal.
- Use a mobile phone to call or text a parent/guardian during school hours for any reason.

4. Emergency Communication and Exemptions

4.1 Emergency Communication (Home to Student)

Parents/Guardians who need to contact their child urgently must do so by calling the **School Office** at 074-9131246 or by email at admin@stcolumbasstranorlar.ie. School staff will ensure the message is relayed or will facilitate contact using the school's landline.

Parents/Guardians are asked **not to contact their child directly** on a personal device during school hours.

4.2 Emergency Communication (Student to Home)

If a student needs to contact a parent/guardian urgently during the school day, they must seek permission from a Deputy Principal or the Principal to use the **School Office Landline**.

4.3 Exemptions (Medical / SEN)

In very limited and exceptional circumstances, where a medical, Additional Educational Needs (AEN), or specific safeguarding requirements necessitates a student having access to a device (e.g., to monitor a medical condition), an exception may be granted by the Board of Management.

- **Procedure:** A formal request for exemption must be made in writing by the Parent/Guardian to the Principal.
- **Condition:** If an exemption is granted, the device will be kept securely in the **School Office** or another agreed-upon location and may only be accessed with the express permission and supervision of a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

5. Relationship to Other Policies and Sanctions

5.1 Relationship to Other Policies

This policy is an integral part of the overall school structure. Any breach of this Mobile Phone Policy is considered a breach of the **Code of Behaviour** and the **Acceptable Use Policy (AUP)**.

- **Misuse of Devices:** Students should be aware that the use of a personal device to bully, harass, intimidate, or take inappropriate photos/videos is a serious breach of the **Bí-Cinealta Policy**, **Anti-Bullying Policy** and the **Code of Behaviour** and will lead to severe sanctions.
- **Digital Literacy:** While personal devices are restricted, the school is committed to digital education, which is delivered through planned, purposeful use of technology in class under the guidance of the **AUP**.

5.2 Responsibility and Liability

The school accepts **no responsibility** for replacing mobile phones or electronic devices that are **lost, stolen, or damaged** on the school premises or while travelling to and from school.

The safety and security of personal mobile phones and electronic devices are solely the responsibility of the student and their parent/guardian.

5.3 Breaches of Policy and Resulting Consequences

Breaches of this policy will be dealt with in accordance with the disciplinary procedures outlined in the **Code of Behaviour (September 2025)**.

Offence	Action Taken
First Offence	The phone/device is immediately confiscated by the staff member and handed to the Deputy Principal/Principal. The phone will only be returned to a Parent/Guardian who must arrange to collect it from the Deputy Principals'/ Principal's Office. A formal sanction (e.g., lunchtime detention) will be applied.
Second Offence	The phone/device is immediately confiscated . A meeting with the Parent/Guardian, Student, and Deputy Principal/Principal is required. Further disciplinary action, up to and including suspension , will be applied. The student may be permanently banned from bringing a mobile phone to school for the remainder of the academic year.
Refusal to Comply	Failure or refusal to hand over a mobile phone/device upon request by a staff member will be treated as a serious act of defiance and will result in an immediate referral to the Deputy Principal/Principal and may result in a suspension, as per the Code of Behaviour.
Tampering with Pouch	This is considered a serious breach of trust and integrity. The phone/device is immediately confiscated . The student is referred to the Deputy Principal/Principal, and a formal sanction will be applied due to wilful defiance and interference with school property.
Malicious Use	Misuse of a phone (e.g., cyberbullying, filming without consent) will incur sanctions up to and including Suspension or Expulsion , as per the most severe terms of the Bí-Cinealta Policy, Anti-Bullying Policy and Code of Behaviour policies.

6. Ratification and Review

6.1 Implementation of Policy

St. Columba's College Mobile Phone and Digital Device Policy has been ratified by the Board of Management and formally adopted on **3rd December 2025**.

We commit to ensuring its implementation in a manner that upholds the College's Catholic identity while fully respecting the rights and dignity of every student.

Signature: P. J. McGowan
(Chairperson, Board of Management)

Date: 01/12/25

Signature: [Signature]
(Principal)

Date: 03/12/2025

6.2 Review of Policy

The school will monitor / review on a regular basis, and evaluate the policy and all related work and procedures to ensure legal compliance and the maintenance of best practices.

Date for Review: November 2027



St. Columba's College Stranorlar, Co. Donegal.

Phone (074) 9131246 Fax (074) 9132528

We have read the St. Columba's College Mobile Phone and Digital Device Policy and understand and accept the terms and conditions outlined above, including the use of the secure pouch system and the sanctions for any breach of this policy.

Student Declaration

I, the student, have read and understand the Mobile Phone and Digital Device Policy, and I agree to abide by all rules, including the secure storage procedure, and accept the consequences of any breach.

Student's Name (Block Capitals): _____

Student's Signature: _____

Date: ____/____/____

Parent/Guardian Declaration

I/We have read the Mobile Phone and Digital Device Policy and agree to accept and support its full implementation, including the use of the secure storage system and the disciplinary procedures for breaches.

Parent's / Guardian's Name (Block Capitals): _____

Parent's / Guardian's Signature: _____

Date: ____/____/____