



St. Michael's House Special National School

Raheny

PHONE USE POLICY FOR STAFF

Introduction

This policy outlines the procedures to be followed for phone use by staff members at St. Michael's House SNS Raheny.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to give staff clear guidelines regarding the appropriate use of mobile phones in the workplace or while carrying out their duties in the school. It aims to ensure that phone usage does not interfere with the educational process and become a distraction to our work.

Rationale

Mindful of the duties and responsibilities assigned to staff working with pupils, it is vital that staff are engaged in always working with pupils throughout the school day and clear procedures must be outlined for this.

Also, the school has a duty to formally ensure the protection of privacy for pupils and staff and ensure the use of appropriate channels of communication between staff and parents.

SCHOOL RELATED CALLS

- Calls to parents / guardians should be kept as short as possible. Where a lengthy conversation with parents / guardians is deemed necessary, this call should be made after class time, or an appointment should be made to meet with parents / guardians.
- Staff should not give personal contact details to parents. In exceptional circumstances, staff should discuss this with the Principal prior to providing such details.
- Calls to other professionals and organisations should be made after class time or in consultation with the Principal so that classroom supervision can be arranged.

PERSONAL CALLS

- Access to personal phones should be limited to urgency / emergency and the use of the school WhatsApp groups only.
- In general, personal calls should only be made during staff break times.
- In cases of urgency / emergency, a staff member should use discretion in making calls.
- Incoming calls should be reserved for urgent matters only. They should be taken outside the classroom and away from pupils.

MOBILE PHONES

- The school supports the safe use of technology by the teacher and SNAs to help visual learners and communication.
- Staff are permitted to use mobile phones to check school related WhatsApp groups, and this practice will continue beyond 2024/2025.
- Staff are not permitted to use their mobile phones to make calls, surf the web, access social media or send texts during class time or for any other reason unrelated to school.
- Staff may use their mobile phones during breaks and lunchtimes.
- In cases of urgency, staff should follow the same rules in relation to personal calls.
- The same rules apply to texting / using phone internet i.e. staff break times only.
- In very exceptional circumstances (e.g. an ill family member) staff may, with the permission of the principal, have more phone access. An explanation should be given to the class in this case.
- For privacy & personal safety, teachers should only use the school phone when contacting parents. However, if personal phones must be used (for example if the class are on a tour/trip), the personal phone number should be withheld through the phone settings.
- Personal phones should not be used to store personal data of pupils.
- School tablets **ONLY** should be used for school-related photography and to be used by school staff for school activities.
- The tablet will have a password to access the device. It will be used for educational purposes such as Seesaw, to take photographs necessary for recording of activities for assessment purposes. Photos can also be used on School social media and for Graduation, once permission from the parents has been given for use of photographs.
- The photographs on the tablet should be deleted at the end of every month. School management team will check this periodically.
- Tablets should be locked in a cupboard in the classroom at the end of each day.

WhatsApp Groups

1. The whole School WhatsApp Group

- Staff are not required to join this WhatsApp group and must consent to joining.
- Written consent forms for participation in the Whole School WhatsApp group should be signed. (Appendix 1)
- A new whole school WhatsApp group will be created every year and will use seven-day deletion.
- The Group should not be used for; seeking resources from colleagues in other classes, lost and found and updates regarding damaged property.
- Where somebody decides not to join this WhatsApp group, they should request information relating to Transitions, Buses and Housekeeping from a colleague.

Whole School WhatsApp Group- Times/Purpose

9.00- 9.30 AM - Housekeeping

Messages from Principal, School Management Team and Secretary only.

These messages will relate to ongoings that staff should be made aware of; e.g. Maintenance work, late bus, school event, lift broken etc...

9.30- 2.50 PM – School Day

All staff may use the group for info re: Transitions, Lift & Emergencies ONLY

2.50- 3.15 PM -Buses

The group can only be used by the Principal, School Management Team and Secretary during this time and should only relate to buses and transitions from the school.

3.15- 4.00 PM- Housekeeping

A repeat of the morning process.

Other Times

Communication from Principal and School Management regarding matters of urgency only. This is to safeguard the wellbeing of staff.

Whole School WhatsApp Group- Language

- Language should be formal and to the point.
- The use of student's names and initials is in breach of GDPR and their dignity. It is not permitted.
- Examples of useful phrases to use are;

Class Name Transition Started	Class Name Transition Finished,
Lift out of Action	Lift back in Action

2. Class WhatsApp Groups, Teachers, SNAs, and Bus Escort WhatsApp Groups

- Staff are not required to join WhatsApp this group and must consent to joining
- Verbal consent is sufficient between members for Class WhatsApp groups, Teachers, SNAs, and Bus Escort groups.
- Class WhatsApp groups are required to use seven-day deletion.
- WhatsApp groups should only be used for necessary communication where there is no time to reach other parties in person.
- Class WhatsApp groups should only be used when the Class is separated. Only necessary professional communication should occur between Class Team members on the group.
- Language should be formal and to the point.

REVIEW OF THIS POLICY

This policy will be reviewed as deemed necessary by the Board of Management (typically every five years).

IMPLEMENTATION AND COMMUNICATION OF THIS POLICY

The Board of Management ratified this policy on 26th November 2024. A copy will be given to all staff in the school and a master copy will be kept under the policies section of the School Plan.

Signed: _____

Chairperson, Board of Management

Date: _____

**St Michael's House SNS Raheny
Whole School WhatsApp Group**

Consent form _____

I _____ (print name)

Consent to joining the SMH Raheny Whole School WhatsApp Group for the school year _____ and understand that I may leave this group at any time. I also agree to comply with the terms of this policy.

Signature

Date