



MOBILE PHONE POLICY & GUIDELINES

1. RATIONALE AND AIMS OF THE POLICY

The aim of this policy is to protect and support the welfare, wellbeing, and safety of all within our school community. This policy is intended to support schools in:

- improving the learning environment in schools by reducing screentime distraction
- reducing the risk of cyberbullying and access to inappropriate content during school hours
- increasing traditional social interactions between students at school break times • comply with the Department of Education and Youth Circular 0045/2025

As stated in Circular 0045/2025, schools are required to implement a policy aimed at restricting the use of, and access to, personal mobile phones by students for the duration of the school day, including during breaks and at lunchtimes. The policy to restrict the use of phones by students during the school day outside of limited exceptions (please see below) will enable the school to provide a phone-free environment, support students' wellbeing, concentration levels, academic performance and personal growth. The implementation of this policy will provide a space for students to disconnect from their online world and can assist in supporting them to become less dependent on their mobile phones.

Presentation College recognises that mobile phones play an integral part in young people's lives. The school also recognises that mobile phones can have considerable benefits and value when used appropriately. However, we are also cognisant that mobile phones can serve as a major distraction and obstacle to effective engagement in learning, can hinder communication and socialisation, and can contribute to high levels of anxiety and stress among young people and adults.

Issues identified with mobile phone usage in Secondary Schools

- Research shows that screen time can impact short-term understanding and long-term retention of information. Students with less phone contact generally **perform better academically**.

- Less screen time reduces risk of screen addiction and improves concentration levels. Students are better able to engage in **critical thinking and problem-solving** which are key skills needed for building their **resilience**.
- Cyberbullying, harassment, and the sharing of harmful content, hurtful messages and personal **misinformation** are all issues arising from increased exposure to mobile devices.
- **Social exclusion** and the need for students to conform to a certain online persona can compound both anxiety and feelings of peer pressure. This can result in loneliness and have negative impacts on mental health and wellbeing. Conversely, less screen time enhances **social interaction** between students which in turn can allow for relationship-building and reduced anxiety. The opportunity to develop social skills and of learning how to communicate effectively (eye contact) are also enhanced by less screen time.
- Phone misuse/overuse can lead to **disrupted sleep patterns**, leading to fatigue, reduced attention capacity, low mood and poorer academic performance.
- **Academic integrity** and assessment fairness are becoming increasingly compromised, leading to distortions in appraising student academic ability.

In order to ensure a healthy, engaging and safe environment for all members of our school community, Presentation College will be a mobile phone/personal smart device free zone during the school day including at break and lunch times. This includes smart phones/watches, ear/air pods and personal tablets etc.

The aim of this policy is to safeguard the wellbeing of all in Presentation College, and it should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- Acceptable Usage Policy
- Bí Cineálta Anti-Bullying Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Child Protection Policy and Procedures
- Wellbeing Statement

2. DAILY ROUTINE

Phone Pouches

Phones are not to be used during the school day. Every student is assigned a personal phone pouch. It is each student's responsibility to bring their pouch with them to school every day and keep it in good working condition.

Smart watches and air/ear pods must also be placed in the pouch. Sanctions apply in the same way if these items are visible during the school day.

Start of the day

As students enter the school buildings they will:

- 1) Turn their phone off at the entry points (Student entrance, Canteen entrance, Rice Building entrance)
- 2) Open their phone pouch by tapping against the unlocking base.
- 3) Place their phone inside the pouch and lock their pouch.
- 4) Store it in their school bag or locker for the day.
- 5) Teachers will check pouches at the start of each class to ensure they are locked.

End of the Day

Students will:

- 1) Open their pouch at one of the exit points by tapping against the unlocking base.
- 2) Remove their phone.
- 3) Close their pouch (Important to prevent damage such as the pin bending in the bag).
- 4) Keep in their school bag overnight.

Late Starters or Early Leavers

Students arriving late to school or leaving early will pouch/un-pouch their phones in the main reception office of the school in the presence of the school secretary. Students are reminded that all daily late arrivals or early leavers must present to sign in and out at the reception office as is the expected norm.

3. VIOLATIONS

Pouches will be checked regularly throughout the day by Management, Year Heads, Class Tutors and teachers, to make sure they have not been damaged or unlocked, and that students are generally complying with the mobile phone policy.

Pouch damage or lost pouch

If a student damages or loses their pouch, their phone will be confiscated and handed in to the Deputy Principal's office. Parents will be informed and students will have to pay €25 to purchase a replacement pouch. It is expected that students will pay this fee ASAP and use their new pouch from then onwards. If there is any delay in purchasing a new pouch, students will continue to hand their phone in to the Deputy Principal's office each morning until a new pouch is purchased, and parents may be contacted again to remind them of this ongoing situation.

Examples of damage:

- Ripped fabric
- Cut
- Torn

- Bent/cut pin
- Signs of force to black button on flap
- Damage to the black ball
- Pouch opens without unlocking station

Phone seen during School

First offence - If a student is found in possession of a phone outside a pouch during the school day, the phone will be confiscated and can be collected from the Deputy Principal's after the end of the school day. It should be noted this may not be at exactly 3.50 pm (or 1.05pm on a Wednesday) as it will depend on the Deputy Principal's availability at that time on any given day. The student will also be required to hand his phone in to the Deputy Principal's office for the following three days, and the student will also serve a 1-hour Friday detention.

Second offence – If a student is found in possession of a phone outside a pouch during the school day, as outlined above, the phone will be confiscated and can be collected from the Deputy Principal's after the end of the school day. However, this time, the student will receive a two-day suspension for the following two school days.

Repeat offences – The Senior Management of the school will consider more severe sanctions (up to and including further graded suspensions) and a plan moving forward which will be communicated in a meeting to parents/guardians.

Forgotten pouch

If a student forgets their pouch, their phone will be collected and handed in to the Deputy Principal's office. Parents/Guardians will be contacted and reminded of the policy. The phone will be returned to the student at the end of the school day as outlined above.

If a student consistently forgets their pouch, it is considered lost. (Refer to the lost pouch section above).

Unlocking stations

If a student is found in possession of an unlocking station, or a similar strength magnet used to unlock the pouches, this will be considered a serious offence and will lead to a suspension. Damage to an unlocking station will be viewed both as a serious breach of the College Code of Behaviour and as damage to school property and will be sanctioned accordingly.

4. FLEXIBILITY/EXEMPTIONS

Some flexibility may be allowed when there are school activities taking place off school grounds e.g. sports games and TY activities during the school day. In such instances students will be facilitated in releasing their mobile phones from their pouches either from the main reception office prior to their leaving, or via a portable unlocking device which the supervising teacher may carry on his or her possession on the bus for this specific purpose.

When students return to school from an activity before the end of the school day, they will be expected to repouch again before entering the building. This action will be overseen by the supervising teacher.

If individual students are returning to school following an appointment or from an activity and are not accompanied by a supervising teacher (which may be the case with some activities, typically in TY), they must repouch at the reception office as they enter the building.

Exemptions will only apply on medical grounds and will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Parents/Guardians should contact the school in advance to make them aware of the medical condition that requires their son to access their mobile phone. Examples of some of the possible conditions may include:

- Diabetes blood glucose monitoring and/or insulin delivery mechanism.
- Blood pressure monitoring.
- Seizure conditions where monitoring via a mobile phone app is needed.
- Additional/special educational needs, for specific tasks relating to a student's visual impairment, hearing impairment, speech and language impairments.
- Periodic access by an English as an Additional Language (EAL) student to specific applications to support language development. This will be determined by the EAL teacher on a lesson-by-lesson basis.

Please note that students under these circumstances will also be required to use a phone pouch but it will be a Velcro pouch allowing for immediate access if/when required.

Please note that for the remainder of the 2025/2026 school year, leniency will be extended to the current 6th year group, as we are introducing our new policy mid-year. Hence, current 6th year students will not be required to use a phone pouch this year. (This is subject to change as outlined below). We feel that the timing of the new policy may disrupt their learning so close to their Leaving Certificate exams in June. This is a one-off provision for the current 6th year group for this year and will not be repeated in future years. From August 2026 all year groups will be expected to comply with the new policy. Please be aware that the current 6th years have been made aware that they need to comply with the previous existing mobile phone policy of the school (please see school website under policy tab). Failure to comply may lead to mobile phone pouches being introduced to the 6th year group at a date during this academic year.

5. FURTHER POINTS OF NOTE

- All communication during the school day between parents/guardians and the school must be made through our school office or via the Compass App. If a parent/guardian needs to make urgent contact with their son, a call should be placed with the reception office and a message will be passed to the student with immediate effect.
- It is the student's responsibility to keep their pouch containing their phone in a safe and secure location (e.g. in their schoolbag or in their locker). Presentation College accepts no responsibility for lost, stolen or damaged mobile phones and personal smart devices such as smart watches and air/ear pods.

- As previously communicated by the school, students will no longer be permitted to pay for food in the canteen by tapping their phones. Students will be required to obtain and use a physical payment card or cash going forward.
- Any student found with a 'fake/dummy' phone, or any other device imitating their phone, in their pouch is in breach of this policy and this will be dealt with following the same graded steps as outlined in the violations section outlined above.
- Any student who forgets to unlock their mobile phone pouch at the end of the school day can either return to the school to unlock the pouch or enjoy a phone free evening.

6. FURTHER SUPPORTS AND RESOURCES

- Webwise - [the Irish Internet Safety Awareness Centre](#) - provides free information and resources for schools, families and young people on online safety and digital citizenship. Webwise also provides tools to parents to support their engagement in their children's online lives. [Webwise Youth Advisory Panel](#) provides resources and training programmes that promote digital citizenship and addresses topics such as online well-being and cyberbullying.
- NEPS (National Educational Psychological Services) – has developed a range of wellbeing information and supports for schools, students and parents/guardians which are available on [gov.ie](#).
- The Department of Education, along with its support services and the HSE, also have a range of documents and resources to assist in the promotion of wellbeing across school communities, also available on [gov.ie](#).