

**PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL**  
**JOINT NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE FOR TEACHING STAFF**  
**LOCAL AGREEMENT**  
**MOBILE TECHNOLOGIES – GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOLS**

In terms of the Local Recognition and Procedure Agreement, it is accepted by all signatories acting on behalf of the Council and the recognised unions that this agreement is a binding local agreement effective from 28 April 2009. This supersedes relevant provisions within the National Agreement and constitutes a formal amendment to the terms and conditions of employment for teaching employees within Perth and Kinross Council.

John Fyffe, Executive Director (Education and Children’s Services), on behalf of Perth and Kinross Council:

*John Fyffe*

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Douglas Stewart (EIS), on behalf of Teachers’ Trade Unions:

*Douglas Stewart*

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**PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL**  
**EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

**MOBILE TECHNOLOGIES – GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOLS**

**1.0 BACKGROUND**

1.1 The Service Statement of Intent includes the following:

- Keep individuals safe and protected
- Develop active and responsible citizens

1.2 The advances in mobile technologies<sup>1</sup> have been rapid in recent years and developments will continue. A mobile or cellular phone is a long-range, portable electronic device for personal telecommunications over long distances.

1.3 The technology enables users to access a wide range of facilities, including phone calls, text, email, photographs, video clips, games, music, internet access, TV programmes and radio. The benefits of such devices are obvious and it is accepted that this is the preferred means of electronic communication. A high percentage of youngsters of all ages and socio-economic groups have their own personal communications devices.

1.4 There are a number of projects and pilot studies presently underway in the UK and across the world where the focus is on using such technologies in a positive way to support learning and teaching in classrooms. This is exciting and is reminiscent of how the world wide web (www) and the internet have developed to support younger people's learning. Until there is a clearer picture of how such pilots might be further developed in Perth & Kinross schools, the focus of this paper is on the current use of such devices for communications.

**2.0 SCHOOL CONTEXT**

2.1 Increasing numbers of young people carry communications devices to school in the same way that they carry pens and pencils. However, even the basic use of a phone in a school environment intrudes on other people and should be used with due care and within the appropriate rules.

**3.0 SCHOOL POLICY**

3.1 All Perth & Kinross schools have acceptable use policies for ICT and internet access in the school environment. Communications devices should only be used in schools according to this policy framework. Alerting pupils to their

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<sup>1</sup> "Mobile technologies" includes mobile phones, Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs) with mobile telephony, portable games consoles, WiFi-enabled MP3 players and other related devices.

rights and responsibilities should be managed as part of citizenship, health and well-being and personal and social education.

- 3.2 It is recommended that the normal consultation process regarding policy formulation is continued and staff, pupils and parents are engaged in the process as appropriate. Parental engagement and co-operation is likely to support successful implementation of agreed policy as well as apprising them of the outcomes should the policy be abused. It is understood that, whilst the key principles are the same for all schools, the operational aspects of the policy may differ slightly depending on the age of the pupil and/or the size and location of the school.
- 3.3 The majority of young people use communications devices appropriately and abide by existing rules. However an increasing number of pupils are misusing such devices and are possibly unaware that they may also be breaking the law. Clearly stated policy is necessary to ensure the safety and protection of all people on school premises, staff as well as pupils. It is the responsibility of all members of staff to implement the agreed policy.

#### **4.0 PUPIL RIGHTS**

- 4.1 Parents provide their children with a communications device for a variety of reasons including personal safety. It is the right of a pupil to bring a personal mobile phone to school with the clear understanding that the individual pupil is responsible for its care and usage.
- 4.2 In the case of younger pupils, the parent/carer should be clear that the phone is ultimately the responsibility of the child and not the teacher or another staff member. Primary schools however may choose to gather in mobile phones during the school day. Such operational aspects are at the discretion of the individual school.
- 4.3 Communications devices should be switched off in classrooms and whilst moving between classes except as part of a planned programme of learning or in agreed exceptional circumstances. Individual establishments may be more specific depending on the age of the pupil, the timing of the school day and physical environment.
- 4.4 Pupils may use communications devices at intervals and at lunchtimes.

#### **5.0 PUPIL RESPONSIBILITIES**

- 5.1 It is the pupil's responsibility to ensure their device is switched off in accordance with school policy.
- 5.2 Bullying and harassment of pupils and staff are unacceptable in any form in school and this includes the use of communications devices.

- 5.3 The use of communications devices during breaks and lunchtimes is acceptable on the understanding that the school behaviour policy as well as the communications policy is respected.
- 5.4 Using a communications device to take photographs and/or video clips of other pupils/staff without individual permissions is not permitted in a school context.
- 5.5 Pupils should not download unsuitable material.
- 5.6 It is an offence to forward images/materials of a pornographic nature by mobile phone. Young people should be made aware of such aspects of the law.

## **6.0 POLICY BREACHES**

- 6.1 Schools should clearly state the possible consequences of violation of school policy.
- 6.2 Members of staff may confiscate devices which are used in breach of school policy and procedures. Should devices require to be confiscated then school procedures and protocols should be explicit and known to all pupils, staff and parents. Members of staff who confiscate a device must follow these procedures, particularly with respect to secure storage. Staff duties with respect to confiscation should be clearly stated in the school handbook.
- 6.3 Devices must always be returned to the pupil, parent, or in exceptional circumstances, the police.
- 6.4 Persistent violations of school policy may result in a pupil losing the right to carry a communications device on school premises. Discussion with parents/carers would be crucial prior to this happening. Such repeated violations of school policy (or very serious individual breaches) may also result in serious disciplinary sanctions (including exclusion from school) being applied. The police may also require to be involved in certain serious cases.

## **7.0 HEALTH AND SAFETY**

- 7.1 Research into the safety of communications devices has produced inconclusive results although most experts agree that it is sensible to limit the use of mobiles by young children. Therefore, it is a parent's decision to provide a child with a communications device.

## **8.0 SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES**

- 8.1 Many devices give access to internet-based social networking sites. Whilst an integral part of the social and leisure existence of almost all young people (and of many teachers and parents), they present some

significant challenges in terms of cyber-bullying<sup>2</sup>. It is recommended that such sites are blocked via the school network and that school policy places appropriate bans on the use of such sites via relevant devices during school hours. Vigilance and prompt action are essential. However, the difficulties associated with the management of such networks, and of causing action by site owners, are considerable.

- 8.2 There are also inherent risks in the use of such sites for teachers with respect to the potential overlap between their personal and professional lives. Appendix A contains a sample school advice statement for staff members on managing social networking involvement.

## **9.0 CHILD EXPLOITATION & ON-LINE PROTECTION (CEOP)**

- 9.1 CEOP is a Government agency whose work is centred on protecting children and young people from exploitation using on-line media or websites.
- 9.2 Training in protecting children and young people from on-line exploitation is a part of the service provided to staff and pupils and offered to parents by Perth & Kinross Council.
- 9.3 Through this training, all staff will become more aware of the significant potential dangers posed by a range of on-line social and leisure sites. Since many devices now support access to such sites, it is important that school policy addresses these issues. Again, it must be noted that vigilance and prompt action are essential.

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<sup>2</sup> “cyber-bullying” includes the use of mobile phones and other related devices, and also e-mail to abuse, threaten or otherwise distress another person.

## Appendix A

### Sample School Advice to Members of Staff on the Use of Social Networking Sites.

#### Blackfriars Academy Guidelines for Mobile Communications Technology

In order to protect the safety of our staff in Blackfriars Academy, the following guidelines are offered for the use of mobile communications technology and social networking sites.

#### Social Networking sites

If you use a social networking site, it is recommended that: you keep your site **private**, rather than allowing **public** access. By creating a username that is not your own name, pupils will be less likely to find you. Pupils may still find your site, and request to be added as a friend. If you choose to allow them access, it is recommended that you adopt the following procedures:

- You consider having one site for personal use and a second for professional use (e.g. homework clinics, revision note provision), as you do not want pupils reading posts from your own social contacts;

N.B. This eliminates almost all of the issues below as long as your personal site has a name that is not guessable by pupils. However, the following are good practice regardless of your circumstances:

- If you do not know and trust a pupil, do not allow them access (on either site);
- Your site should not contain personal details or potentially embarrassing photographs;
- You should consider who else pupils may be able to access from your site e.g. by looking at your friends;
- if a pupil leaves an inappropriate or abusive message, print the message out and immediately block them from your site. Refer this to the appropriate Year Head;
- any communications with pupils should not stray into what could be considered inappropriate on your behalf;
- if a pupil discloses something that could be a child protection issue, you have a duty to report this in school.

The school website has a forum section that will allow you to communicate with pupils outwith school, if you wish to do so.

#### Mobile Phones (and similar devices)

It is not recommended that you give your mobile number out to any parent or pupil. If there is a situation where pupils will need a mobile number to contact you on (e.g. for a school trip), we recommend that the department purchases a pay-as-you-go phone for use on such occasions. It is also not recommended that you have pupils' mobile phone numbers on your personal phone because of potential loss or theft.

It is recommended that you keep your Bluetooth switched off in school, in case you inadvertently receive something intended for someone else. Do not bring your phone into school if there are any files on it that would cause you embarrassment if they got into the wrong hands.

In keeping with school policy, pupils should not have their mobile phones on in your class. If you see someone who does, ask them to switch it off. Extreme caution should be taken before you confiscate a phone and in handling the safety/security of the phone after confiscation. If it goes missing whilst in your possession, you will be responsible. Also, do not leave a confiscated phone on someone else's desk with a note (in the hope that they will return and lock it away for you) – you are still responsible if it goes missing. Until you have seen it safely transferred to a place of safe-keeping, you are the responsible member of staff.

Do not allow pupils to take photos of you or others in your class, or to make videos using their phones, or other devices. If you catch someone doing this, ask them to delete it and check they have done so. If they refuse, or you are in any doubt, refer this to your PT, who may decide to refer on to the year head. If you see that a pupil has inappropriate material on their phone, urgently seek advice from your PT, the pupil's guidance teacher or their year head.

### **Email**

For similar reasons to the Social Networking advice, it is not recommended that you give pupils your personal email address. If you need pupils to email you homework, etc, you can give them your school Groupwise address. You must carefully consider whether it is appropriate to give your personal email address out to parents. Guidance teachers, principal teachers and year heads may consider using this means to communicate with parents, but it would not normally be appropriate for a classroom teacher to communicate with parents in this way. Parents may, however, access you via your business e-mail address. It is recommended that such communication is carried out in accordance with school's protocol on 'gate-keeping' systems.

### **Instant Messaging**

It is not recommended that you use instant messaging to communicate with pupils or parents in any way. Please be particularly vigilant for any signs of cyber-bullying of pupils using this medium OR chains of inappropriate messages about staff members. Please report any such occurrences immediately to the Principal teacher, Guidance or the Year Head, as appropriate.

### **Websites/wikis/blogs/on-line gaming/dating sites/etc.**

While you are at liberty to post what you like on the internet as an individual in your own time, again it is recommended that you ensure that anything that you post should not cause yourself, the school or the authority awkwardness or embarrassment if a pupil were to access it.

You should be aware that both the GTC and Perth & Kinross Codes of Conduct apply here. You should also be aware that certain aspects of the misuse of devices may require the implementation of Child Protection procedures and a referral to the Child Protection coordinator.

If you see (or are made aware of) anything inappropriate about yourself, another member of staff, a pupil or the school in general on a website, please refer this immediately to your PT, who should take it to the relevant year head or the ICT Manager (Mr/Ms X) for investigation.