

Aberdeenshire Education, Learning & Leisure

Policy and Procedures Circular

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A C T I O N

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SUBJECT: CODE OF PRACTICE: USE OF MOBILE PHONES IN SCHOOLS

Colleagues will be aware that nationally there has been significant concern regarding reported misuse of mobile phones with camera and video capabilities by pupils in schools. Aberdeenshire Education, Learning & Leisure have therefore produced the following code of practice.

Mobile phones are now part of the 21st Century technological society, and therefore Aberdeenshire Council does not seek, by policy, to ban outright the use of mobile phones in all schools. They can, when used appropriately, enhance pupil safety and provide opportunities to support learning & teaching. Schools should therefore ensure that, even where individual school policy bans the use of mobile phones in school, that the school's curriculum addresses good practice in their use.

Primary/Special

Should a Primary/Special school headteacher, following appropriate consultation with their parent council, wish to introduce, or continue with a complete ban on the carrying to and use of mobile phones in their school, then this individual school agreement will be supported by the Authority. If however the school permits the carrying of mobile phones then the following code of practice, in conjunction with the school's own behaviour policies, in regard to the use of mobile phones, must be fully adhered to.

Secondary

It is accepted that in secondary schools the carrying of mobile phones to school is reasonable, provided the following code of practice, in conjunction

with any individual schools behaviour policies, in regard to the use of mobile phones, is fully adhered to.

School Transport, School Trips and Extra Curricular Activities

This code of practice and any associated individual school policies in regard to the use of mobile phones also applies to their use on school transport, school trips and extra curricular activities.

Parental contact with young people/pupils during the school day.

It is recognised that parents/carers and pupils have the right, when necessary, to be able to make contact with one another via telephone. This contact would normally be through the school office. Schools should therefore ensure that parents/carers and young people/pupils are notified of the school's procedures for making contact during the school day. These school procedures should be developed, by the school, in conjunction with the Parent Council.

Use of Mobile Phones in Schools

It should be clearly noted that neither the school nor the education authority will take any responsibility for any loss or damage to a pupil's mobile phone if it has been brought to school. Therefore the authority strongly advises parents/carers to ensure their children's phones are covered by an appropriate "all risks" insurance policy. Schools should ensure that all parents/carers and pupils are advised of this.

Where school policy allows young people/pupils to take mobile phones to school then the following limitations on their use will apply in order to avoid disruption to learning and teaching and to limit the possibility of bullying and other unacceptable behaviour:-

- It is illegal to use the mobile phone to
 - Bully e.g "text bullying"
 - to film criminal activity e.g. "happy slapping"
 - to download and/or circulate pornography
 - to carry out any other criminal activity e.g. "racism"

Any such behaviour will always be reported to the appropriate authorities.
- The use for taking of photographs and/or audio/video footage is not permitted without prior permission in writing from the headteacher. Following this approval, by the headteacher, the subject's/subjects' agreement must also be sought and received.
- No pupil is allowed to take a mobile phone into any SQA examination, even if the telephone is switched off. Any pupil found to be in possession of a mobile phone would be disqualified from the examination. Schools should ensure that safe storage is available for any mobile phone brought to school by the candidate.

- School policy may insist that all pupil mobile phones are collected at the beginning of the school day and returned to the pupil at the end of school day. The school must have appropriate procedures in place to ensure there is absolutely no possibility of a phone being returned to anyone other than the owner.
- Where school policy allows the carrying of mobile phones into classrooms they must always be switched off during class times unless specific permission has been granted by the class teacher to allow the phone to be turned on.
- During intervals and lunch breaks the use of Mobile phones will be determined by local school procedures.

Sanctions

Pupils not complying with the code of practice and any associated individual school policies, in regards to the use of mobile phones, may have their mobile phones confiscated by school staff until the end of the school day or as specified within the establishments own discipline policy, when the phone will be returned, unless for example, the police have been contacted regarding serious levels of inappropriate use e.g. filming “happy slapping” and/or regarding the download or circulation of pornography. Where the phone has been confiscated because of inappropriate taking of photographs and/or audio/video footage the return is conditional on the pupil or parent/carer deleting that material. Schools are advised to contact parents/carers in all cases where inappropriate photographs/video/audio footage has been found, unless advised not to do so by any required police contact. The photographing of any member of staff without their permission, whilst on Council premises, could be deemed inappropriate under the terms of this code of practice. Pupils, parents/carers should be made aware of this through the establishments own discipline policy.

Confiscation of Mobile Phones

Where a young person/pupil has breached the above code of practice and any associated school policies, in regard to the use of mobile phones, the school may confiscate the mobile phone. If a mobile phone is confiscated by a member of staff then the mobile phone should be stored in a secure area. A signature should be received from the pupil upon return of the mobile phone confirming return receipt. Details of the confiscation should be recorded, this record should include the following:

Pupil Name:
 Date:
 Time:
 Reason for confiscation:
 Staff member’s name:
 Mobile Make:
 Mobile Model:
 Mobile Number:
 Return Signature:

Repeated non compliance with the code of practice and any associated individual school policies, in regards to the use of mobile phones, may well result in the withdrawal of permission to take a mobile phone to school. In these circumstances this will be confirmed in writing to parents/carers.

Communication of these guidelines, and any associated individual school policies, should be issued to parents/carers through news letters, school prospectuses, school web sites etc thus ensuring all young people/pupils and parents/carers are fully conversant with the code of practice and any associated school policy in the use of mobile phones in any particular school. Schools should include a section in their discipline policy regarding the use of mobile phones to cover simple disobedience or a case of bullying and/ or harassment.

Date to be actioned by: 22/05/2008