



METHODIST COLLEGE BELFAST PREPARATORY DEPARTMENT

MOBILE PHONE POLICY

The possession and use of mobile phones by primary school pupils is increasing in Primary Schools. The use of mobile phones, particularly with the advent of increasingly sophisticated equipment and camera phones, presents a number of issues. Mobile phones are valuable items *which can be lost, stolen or damaged*. The use of mobile phones with integrated cameras when *used inappropriately, can lead to cyber bullying and other child protection issues*.

Rationale

Methodist College Preparatory Department accepts that it is not realistic to have a policy which prohibits pupils from taking phones to school. Not only would it be impractical to forbid pupils from carrying them, but it is believed that a number of parents would be concerned for health and safety reasons if their child were not allowed to carry a phone at all and might therefore be unable to contact their parents in respect of any situation that might arise.

However, it is the Methodist College Preparatory policy to:

- Discourage and ask parents to discourage all pupils from bringing mobile phones to schools on the grounds that they may be lost or stolen and they can be used inappropriately,
- Include a statement on this policy in the School Information Handbook, which is issued annually to parents.

Where a pupil does bring a mobile phone to school it must be given to the class teacher. The phone will remain switched off during the school day and may not be used, for any purpose, on school premises, grounds or during off-site school activities (such as school swimming or sports activities.)

POLICY

Pupils:

- Pupils are not to bring mobile phones to school unless a parent feels that it is absolutely necessary,
- If necessary P7 pupils may bring a mobile phone to school. This is considered to be a privilege for Primary 7 children and is a privilege that can be removed,
- A form, available from the school office, needs to be filled in by the parent stating the reason why their child needs to bring a phone to school,
- The school principal grants permission for a mobile phone to be brought into school.
- Under special circumstances, Ms Hamilton may give permission for a younger pupil to bring a mobile phone to school,
- All such authorised phones must be switched off and be given to the class teacher at 8:45am each day and the phone will be returned to the child at 3.00pm,
- It is the responsibility of the child to remember to collect the phone. This policy also applies to children participating in after school classes and activities,
- Should parents need to contact pupils or vice versa, this should be done following the usual school procedures via the school office.

Telephone numbers:	Fullerton House	02890 205217
	Downey House	02890 286660

If parents are asked to accompany children on school trips they are requested not to use any digital device.

- If a pupil is found to have an unauthorised phone either on them, or in their school bag etc. between the hours of 8:45am and 3:00 pm the phone will be confiscated. The mobile phone will be stored by the class teacher and kept until a parent comes and collects the phone. Permission to have it in school may be withdrawn by the principal. Unauthorised phones will be confiscated and returned only to parents.
- If a pupil is found taking photographs or video footage with a mobile phone of either other pupils or teachers, this will be regarded as a serious offence and disciplinary action will be taken according to the school's Discipline Procedures. The phone will only be returned to a parent.
- If images of other pupils or teachers have been taken, the phone will not be returned to the pupil until the images have been removed by the pupil in the presence of a teacher and a parent.
- Parents are advised that Methodist College Preparatory accepts no liability for the loss or damage to mobile phones which are brought into the school or school grounds.

Please talk to your child about who is entitled to use his/her mobile number. Text messages can be used to bully pupils.

This policy supports the, Anti-bullying, Child Protection and Internet Acceptable Use policies. It has been endorsed by the Board of Governors, staff, parents and pupils and will be monitored, reviewed and amended as required.

Staff:

Staff members do not give out their phone number or that of any other staff member to pupils or parents/guardians. Mindful of the duties and responsibilities assigned to staff in working with children, it is vital that staff be engaged with children at all working times. Staff are trusted to use their phones accordingly. Use of phones should be discreet and not in the presence of pupils, unless unavoidable.

Work Calls

Calls to parents should be kept as short as possible using only school phones. Where a lengthy conversation with parents/guardians is required, appointments should be made to meet parents.

Personal Calls

In general, personal calls should be carried out outside of teaching time. In cases of urgency, a staff member should use discretion in making calls and ensure that their classroom is supervised during the call. Incoming personal calls should be reserved for urgent matters only.