

Board of Management
Scoil MhuireScoil Mhuire
Parents AssociationPARENT-SCHOOL VOLUNTARY AGREEMENT
REGARDING MOBILE PHONES

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Smartphones, mobile phones, and other smart devices have become integral to daily life for people of all ages. However, there is growing concern among educators and mental health professionals about the impact of smartphone use on children. Evidence suggests that it is linked to rising anxiety levels and exposes children to various risks, such as cyberbullying and harmful online content.

In light of these concerns, the Scoil Mhuire Parents' Association is advocating for a voluntary collective agreement. By signing this agreement we as a community of parents agree to postpone giving our children their own mobile phone and smart device until at least the end of sixth class. There was an almost unanimous response to the survey sent out at the end of the 23/24 academic year, results of which can be found on the reverse of this letter and a more detailed analysis can be found under the Parents' Association tab of the school website.

Here are some compelling reasons for parents to reinforce the benefits of signing up for a mobile phone ban:

- **Reduces Exposure to Online Bullying:** Limits access to social media and digital platforms where harassment can occur.
- **Prevents Cyberbullying:** Minimizes the risk of encountering harmful messages and interactions.
- **Improves Sleep Quality:** Eliminates disruptions caused by screen time and notifications before bed.
- **Enhances Focus:** Reduces distractions, aiding better concentration on studies and activities.
- **Fosters Face-to-Face Social Skills:** Encourages more direct, meaningful interactions with peers.
- **Prevents Access to Inappropriate Content:** Shields children from harmful or unsuitable material.
- **Promotes Healthy Screen Time:** Encourages balanced use of technology and reduces overall screen time.
- **Supports Mental Health:** Decreases the risk of anxiety, depression, and stress associated with excessive smartphone use.
- **Encourages Physical Activity:** Increases time spent on outdoor play and physical activities.

Cyberbullying

Children who engage in cyberbullying often lack a full understanding of the impact of their actions. The anonymity and detachment of digital interactions can lead them to underestimate the emotional pain and psychological harm they cause. Educating children about the real-life consequences of their online actions is crucial in addressing and preventing cyberbullying. Cyberbullying can have severe psychological effects on children, including increased anxiety, depression, and long-term emotional trauma. Victims may struggle with low self-esteem and a sense of isolation, impacting their overall well-being and development. By protecting children from cyberbullying, we help nurture their mental health and foster a safer, more supportive environment where they can thrive emotionally and socially.

Yours sincerely,
The Scoil Mhuire Parents' Association

Survey results measuring the support amongst parents for the agreement 'Keeping Childhood SmartPhone Free'

114 parents responded to the survey from Junior Infants up to 6th class. 108 (95%) of these parents want to be apart of this agreement.

Key Themes and Findings



- A significant number of respondents called for more education sessions for children and parents to manage online safety
- Workshops and webinars for children to educate them on online safety, the risks of excessive media exposure and the dangers of cyberbullying
- Provide user-friendly guides on setting up parental controls and monitoring on various devices including gaming controls
- Calls for a community approach where parents collectively support and educate each other
- Suggestions include age-appropriate presentations and flyers/booklets for children to bring home, discussing the risks and promoting empathy and kindness

School and Community Collaboration

- Calls for a whole school initiative to reduce peer pressure related to phone ownership
- Involve other schools in the area to ensure a consistent approach and broader community support

Mental Health and Wellbeing

- Address the mental health impacts of early social media exposure, gaming addiction and cyberbullying

"I think this is a great initiative and one I fully support"
Parent's voice

A full analysis of results and anonymised responses can be found under the Parents' Association tab on the school website.