



18 December 2017

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Date Changes for the New Year

As you are aware the Department of Education and Skills (DES) is putting in place many key educational changes for young people in the first three years of their post-primary education. The new junior cycle will allow schools to develop a high quality programme that meets the needs of their students and fits the context, environment and community of the school. In order to facilitate this, a day of whole-staff professional development will take place in Coláiste an Spioraid Naoimh on January 8th 2018. This will be followed by another professional day for subject development on Tuesday, 16th January 2018. The school will remain closed to students on both of these dates.

As a consequence of the school closure on January 16th, the 5th Year Parent/Teacher meeting has been rescheduled for Tuesday, 23rd January. This means, as with all days of parent/teacher meetings, that classes will finish at 3.30pm that day.

Changes in Phone Policy

We have had a number of incidents this term where the camera component of mobile phones was used inappropriately by some students in the school. This is expressly forbidden by our Code of Behaviour. To photograph a teacher or a student without their permission is an invasion of privacy and an abuse of their rights. It is essential that teachers and students in a school setting are free to go about their work without the possibility that they will be photographed, videoed or otherwise recorded without their permission.

Policy Changes for Junior Students

As a result of these incidents, we have reviewed our policy with regard to mobile phones. In the incidents that occurred, the students involved were junior school students (from 1st, 2nd and 3rd years). We will no longer allow junior school students to use their phones in school, other than with the express permission of a teacher.

We would ask that parents encourage their sons to leave their phones at home. Other than the occasional need to contact a parent or vice versa, students have very little requirement to have a phone with them during the school day. If they need to contact home, then that can be done through the school.

In the event that phones are brought to school, junior students will be required to turn them off at the school gates and put them into their lockers as soon as they arrive in the building.

The mobile phone should remain in the locker until the end of the school day, when a student may retrieve it and turn it on at the school gates. In the case of students leaving the school premises at lunchtime, they may take their mobile phones with them and turn them on at the school gates, turning them off before they come back in afterwards.

Students who do not abide by the rule will be subject, initially, to a Wednesday detention. Persistent infractions will be dealt with by increased sanctions up to and including suspension.

The school encourages parents to ensure that the lock for their son's locker is robust, suitable and secure enough to safeguard the security of any phone that is stored there. The school takes no responsibility for the storage of mobile phones in lockers – it is the student's responsibility. Parents should ensure that mobile phones are covered under their house insurance policy, as there is no cover available under the school's policy.

Policy Changes for Senior Students

There will be no change in the existing phone policy regarding senior students (4th, 5th and 6th years). However, there will be increased enforcement of the existing policy. The efficacy of the policy will be reviewed and altered if it is deemed not to be working.

Both Junior and Senior students are reminded that the existing policy regarding the camera/video component of the phone remains in force:

The unauthorised use of any electronic device (both on and off the school premises at any time when the student is in school uniform or engaged in any school-related activity) to take images (either still or moving) or to record sound will be regarded as a very serious infringement of school rules. Sanctions for such infringement extend from detention(s) to (in serious cases involving bullying, cyberbullying or bringing the good name of the school or teacher into disrepute) suspension or even expulsion.

The policy changes will come into force from the beginning of the second term, when students return on Tuesday 9th January.

Education about the digital world

More generally, we are encouraging students to use their phones responsibly and have embarked on a process whereby students, teachers and parents are made aware of some of the dangers associated with modern smartphones. Transition Year students have already instructed 1st year students about taking care in the digital world under a mentoring scheme administered by Trend Micro. There will be an inaugural Internet Safety Week beginning on February 5th. Speakers will be invited in to give students, teachers and parents insight into the responsible use of the Internet and Social Media, together with the dangers that present themselves online.

We hope the changes in policy and the creation of awareness about the digital world will lead to more responsible behaviour regarding smartphones and other online devices.

I wish you and your families a very peaceful Christmas and a happy New Year,


Michael Foley