

## **POLICY ON THE USE OF MOBILE PHONES BY PUPILS IN EAST DUNBARTONSHIRE SCHOOLS**

### **1. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to give guidance and direction to Head Teachers on the use of mobile phones by pupils in schools.

### **2. BACKGROUND**

Across all school sectors, the use of mobile phones and their associated technologies i.e. WAP, cameras, video cameras, by pupils is extensive and has continued to increase in the last few years. There have been many concerns raised by Head Teachers, parents and teaching unions to the associated risks.

The use of mobile phones in schools can result in a number of different risks to the school as outlined below:

- pupils bringing expensive mobile phones to school can be subject to an increased risk of theft, assault and bullying;
- the use of mobiles for texting purposes, even when silent, can result in undermining class discipline;
- there is also an increased risk of child protection and data protection issues, through the use of phones and the distribution of the images, which the Council must minimise as much as possible;
- potential risk of use in examinations, which has resulted in the Scottish Qualifications Authority issuing specific guidance expressly prohibiting possession during exams; and
- increased risk that pupils video physical attacks on teachers or pupils and download onto internet video sites, which results in the additional stress that such incidents can cause a victim(s).

The Council recognises that there may be circumstances where a pupil could have a legitimate reason for bringing a mobile phone to school. They might, for example, have to contact their parents to make arrangements at the end of the school day or in an emergency situation. Parents may also wish for their children to carry a mobile phone as a means of contact for safety reasons.

### **3. POLICY**

Having considered the above risks, East Dunbartonshire Council has decided to develop a specific policy for use across all schools throughout the authority.

The policy's aim is to reduce the risks in this area to as low as reasonably possible for both pupils and staff. All establishments should introduce the following:

- Schools should discourage, and should advise parents to discourage, pupils from bringing mobile phones to schools;
- If pupils bring mobile phones to school, the phones must remain switched off while pupils are in class. Once a risk assessment has been carried out by a school's Head Teacher, the switching off of mobile phones by pupils may extend to the whole school building and also to the school grounds.
- Exceptions to this would be in an emergency situation and with the express approval of a senior member of school staff;
- Where a pupil is found by a member of staff to be using a mobile phone, as above, the phone will be confiscated. When a phone is confiscated, a receipt should be passed to the pupil by the relevant member of staff, in order that the receipt can be presented at the end of the school day to uplift the phone;
- 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 the Head Teacher should decide on appropriate discipline. In certain circumstances, the pupil may be referred to the Head of Education. 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;
- Head teachers should brief all staff and parents on this policy and incorporate it into the school's behaviour policy and/or school rules and include reference to the use of mobile phones in the school handbook; and
- Parents should be advised that EDC accepts no liability for the loss or damage to mobile phones which are brought into the school or school grounds.