



CNOC MHUIRE SECONDARY SCHOOL

Granard, Co. Longford

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Principal: Jennifer McCabe



(In line with Department of Education Circular 0045/2025 and Circular 0046/2025)

1. Rationale

The Department of Education and Youth requires all post-primary schools to restrict student access to mobile phones during the school day (Circular 0045/2025).

At Cnoc Mhuire, we're committed to creating a learning environment where every student can thrive. Our young people are growing up in an increasingly complex world, living their lives on and offline. This presents many exciting opportunities – but also academic, emotional and social challenges. Our goal is to promote a focused and distraction-free learning environment whilst safeguarding student wellbeing, preventing harmful use and encouraging responsible use of technology. To support this, we have introduced a mobile phone policy that incorporates the Yondr programme <https://www.veryondr.com/>.

We believe that every student deserves the chance to experience a phone-free education and Yondr pouches provide a simple, secure way of supporting this approach across our school. This approach provides a balanced solution, ensuring young people retain possession of their phones while minimising distractions during school hours. The pouch helps foster social interaction, improve focus on learning and reduce stress associated with phone use, all while maintaining communication for families during travel to and from school.

We will continue to provide for a school environment that is free from the threat of invasion of privacy for all members of our school community, whilst supporting our Positive Code of Behaviour, Bí Cinéalta policy and associated policies by discouraging cyberbullying in all its forms.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies and legislation.

- Positive Code of Behaviour
- Bí Cinéalta (Anti-Bullying) Policy
- Internet Acceptable Use Policy (IAUP)
- IT Acceptable Use Policy
- Education Act, 1998
- Education (Welfare) Act, 2000

2. Scope

This policy applies to all students and covers:

- Mobile phones.
- Other personal smart devices (e.g. fitness trackers with messaging/notification functions, tablets, e-readers with internet access).

The policy applies from arrival onto school grounds in the morning until departure from school grounds, including breaks, lunchtimes, supervised study, trips, extracurricular activities etc.

3. General Rule

As per our current Positive Code of Behaviour, personal mobile phones or other smart devices will be confiscated if switched on and used by students **at any time while on school grounds.**

Daily process:

1) Before 1st class, ensure your pouch is open and if not, unlock your pouch using one of the 15 designated unlocking stations.

2) At the beginning of 1st class, students will turn their phone off, place it inside their pouch and **lock it in the presence of the class teacher.**

3) Throughout the day, students will keep the pouched phone with them and store it in a backpack or locked locker. Students are reminded that they will not have access to their phones at lunchtime and therefore will need cash or a physical debit card if they are going out to buy lunch. They will also need their physical Food Village tag if they wish to collect pre-ordered food. Students are of course always encouraged to bring in a packed lunch over and above either of those options.

4) At the end of the school day, students will unlock their pouch using one of the 15 designated unlocking stations and retrieve their phone.

Pouches must be brought to and from school each day or phones will be securely stored in the office until the end of the day .

Note: Students wishing to sign out of school early must follow current standard procedures:

Request Submission: A parent or guardian must submit the request via the school app in advance. This will be authorised by the year head.

Sign-Out: The student must officially sign out using the school tablet located at the main office.

Collection (Junior Students): Junior students **must be physically collected** by a parent or guardian at the school office and their pouch will be released.

Senior students: Can leave the school grounds with parental permission. They must sign out at the office and their pouch will be unlocked

Upon signing out, office staff will release the student's phone from their Yondr pouch. In the event that the office is unattended, staff in the staffroom are authorized

to release the phone.

If a student has an appointment and returns to school, they must put the phone into the pouch at the office when they sign back in.

This policy also applies to students attending/travelling to/from off-campus school events such as matches, unless authorised by management.

4. Secure Pouches

- Each student will be issued with a lockable pouch from March 18th 2026.
- The responsibility to look after the pouch carefully, use it for the safe and secure storage of their phone and return the pouch, lies with the student, supported by their parents/guardians. Students must return the pouch they were assigned at the end of the school year.
- The mobile phone pouch remains the property of the school. Any loss or damage to a pouch, which renders it unusable, will result in the student purchasing a new pouch at a cost of €15¹. The management's decision about what constitutes unusable shall be binding. Students responsible for graffiti or other purposeful damage to their own, or other student's device pouch, will be liable for sanction and full payment of a new pouch.
- Phones and smart devices must all be placed into their pouch at the beginning of 1st class daily and locked in front of the class teacher.
- In the event that a student forgets their pouch, they need to inform their class teacher and the phone will be stored in the office until the end of the school day.
- Regular checks, to ensure compliance, will be undertaken at any time during the school day and students must present their locked pouch to any member of the school staff when directed to do so. A handheld scanner may be used to aid the spot checks.
- Students are responsible for the care of their pouch; replacement costs of €15¹ may be charged to parents/guardians.
- Bag searches may be conducted by the Principal if teachers have concerns that a student has a mobile device on them that hasn't been placed into their pouch.
- If a student arrives late or is leaving early, they must call to the office to get their device pouched or unpouched while signing in/out.
- Any attempt to tamper with the Yondr system, including use or possession of high-strength magnets will be treated as a serious offence and a breach of this policy, potentially resulting in a replacement fee of €15¹, confiscation until a parent/guardian picks it up and an appropriate sanction.
- The pouch should not be used as a replacement for a protective case and/or screen protector on a mobile device.
- For safety reasons, charging of any device in the Yondr pouch is strictly prohibited.
- If accidental damage of the pouch occurs, students must report it immediately. If damage is discovered during checks that has not been reported, it may be considered intentional.

The following examples may indicate intentional damage:

- ❖ Ripped or cut fabric
- ❖ Bent or cut pin
- ❖ Signs of force to the black locking mechanism
- ❖ Pen marks inside the pouch

¹ This amount may be subject to change.

- ❖ Pouch opening without a station
 - ❖ Scuff marks on the black ball
- This list is not exhaustive.

5. Exemptions

Exemptions may be granted at the discretion of management or under the following categories:

- **Medical Need** (e.g. phone app linked to a medical device, health monitoring smart watch). Documentation on this will be kept in the school file. A medical pouch is available for students who have medical needs and this should be discussed with management.
- **Educational Need** (e.g. assistive technology to support learning). Students may use their devices in class if a teacher requires it and unlocks the pouch for the duration of a class. The phone may only be used for the purpose instructed by the teacher and any alternative use would be deemed a breach of this policy. The pouches must be locked again, in the presence of the teacher, at the end of the class.
- **Students who do not possess a mobile phone** or whose parents/guardians do not allow them to bring their phone to school. In this situation the parent must notify the school of this in writing. Requests must be made using the 'no device form' on the school app. Students may be subject to spot checks to ensure this is being adhered to.

6. Breaches of Policy

- **Breach:** Device confiscated until the end of the day. Parents/guardians will be contacted and reminded of the procedures. Students will be given an Evening Detention for a first offence and Suspended for a second or subsequent offence.

The following is considered a breach:

- Refusal to seal a pouch during 1st class will be treated as a breach.
- In the case of no pouch/damaged pouch, refusal to hand up the devices will be treated as a breach and will result in sanctions in line with policy.
- Having a second phone or pouching another item will be viewed as a breach.
- Having an unpouched phone or an unlocked pouch in your possession.
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- **Persistent breaches:** Meeting held with parent/guardian and Positive Code of Behaviour will be implemented.

7. Parent Communication

Parents/guardians should not contact students directly on their devices during the school day. All urgent communication must go through the school office (043) 6686231.. If a student needs to contact home, this will be facilitated through the office.

8. Liability

The school accepts no responsibility whatsoever for loss, theft or damage to mobile

phones or any other smart devices. Responsibility lies solely with students and parents/guardians. Students are advised to store pouch in their locked locker.

9. Implementation and Review

This policy will be circulated to all staff, parents/guardians and students. It will be reviewed annually by the Board of Management, or earlier if Departmental guidance changes.

10. Emergencies and Safeguarding

- **Medical Conditions:**
Students who require access to their mobile devices for specific medical purposes will be provided with a medical pouch.

- **Emergency Procedures:**
In an emergency, the priority is for students to follow school safety procedures under staff guidance. Unauthorised phone use during such situations may:
 - Delay emergency responses
 - Spread misinformation
 - Put students and staff at increased risk
 - Disrupt coordinated safeguarding measures

Emergency communications will be managed through the school. A staff member will bring a portable unlocking station with them if it is in grasp and safe to do so.

‘No device’ form (via the school app)

Introduction: From 18th March 2026, our school will be going phone-free using the Yondr system. In order to manage this process as smoothly as possible we require this form to be filled out to confirm that your child will not be bringing a mobile phone onto our school site.

Name of person completing form:

Full name of child:

Which Year and class group is your child in:

I confirm that my child **will not be bringing a mobile phone to school**. Should this change, I will notify the school, and my child will be required to use a Yondr pouch. I understand that if my child is found with a mobile device outside of a pouch, the device will be confiscated until it is collected by a parent and sanctioned in line with school policy.

Tick box to follow: Yes I agree with the above statement.

Guidance Note for Parents/Guardians:

Dear Parents and Guardians,

At Cnoc Mhuire we're committed to creating a learning environment where every student can thrive. Our young people are growing up in an increasingly complex world, living their lives on and offline. This presents many exciting opportunities – but also academic, emotional and social challenges. Beginning March 18th, we will launch the Yondr Phone-Free Schools Programme. This isn't just about limiting screen time, it's about giving students the space to think deeply, engage meaningfully, and thrive in an environment designed for their growth.

For over a decade, Yondr has supported schools in more than 40 countries to build healthier, more engaging school cultures. Their pouch-based program, combined with hands-on guidance and dedicated support, has led to powerful results:

- 86% reported improved safety and student wellness
- 84% saw increased engagement in class
- 44% reduced behavioural referrals

How the Programme Works

Each student will be assigned a Yondr pouch – a secure, lockable pouch for storing personal devices. Students are responsible for bringing their pouch to and from school each day and keeping it in good condition.

- **Upon arrival:** Students power off mobile phones and place them in the pouch and lock it in front of a teacher.
- **During the day:** Students keep the locked pouch in their backpack or locked locker.
- **At dismissal:** Students unlock pouches at designated stations to retrieve their devices.

This process is quick, simple, and will be supervised by staff as part of our daily routine.

Staying Connected

With student safety as our top priority, we will follow our standard safety protocols in the event of an emergency. If you need to reach your child during the school day, please contact our main office at 043 6686231.

We know that change takes partnership – and we're here to support a smooth transition for your family. To walk through the program and answer your questions, we'll be hosting an information session: (To be confirmed via app)

Thank you for your continued support as we work together to create a focused, present, and positive school environment for every student.

Yours sincerely,

Jennifer McCabe
Principal

Frequently Asked Questions

Morning and Afternoon Procedures

How quick is the unlocking process?

The unlocking process is quick and students typically don't need to break stride. While students are still getting used to how to unlock pouches, staff will be on hand with mobile unlocking stations to stop queues forming in the first few weeks. If needed, we will add extra unlocking points.

What if my child arrives late or needs to be dismissed early?

The main office will have an unlocking device for students to monitor students arriving late or

leaving early.

Will my child's phone be safe?

Students are in possession of their phone – in their Yondr pouch – for the entire school day. We will advise students to store the pouch safely in their backpacks or locked lockers. While the Yondr pouch will provide some protection, it's not a protective case, so students should continue to handle their phones with the same care they normally would to prevent damage.

What happens if a student forgets to open their pouch at the end of the day?

In Yondr's experience, this almost never happens. All students funnel past the unlocking stations at the exits and they typically want their phones back. If they do arrive home with a phone in a pouch, they can either come back to school to unlock it or have a phone free evening!

What happens if a student forgets to bring in their pouch?

The student's phone will be collected and securely stored in the school office until the end of the day. Parents/Guardians will be contacted and reminded of the procedures. If the pouch is repeatedly forgotten, their pouch will be treated as lost and a replacement fee of €15¹ will be charged. We suggest that students leave the pouches in their school bags or locked lockers.

Daily Pouch Use

What if my child needs their phone for medical reasons?

We have an alternative solution for the small number of students who require their phones for medical reasons (e.g. diabetes). We will be in touch with these families if they have informed us of their medical condition.

My child currently doesn't bring a phone to school; how will this work for them?

Please send an email to office@cno cmhuiregranard.ie and we will discuss next steps.

What happens if a phone is seen outside of a pouch?

If a student is found in possession of a phone **outside their pouch** on school site, the phone will be confiscated and returned when a Parent/Guardian picks it up from the school site. See Phone Pouch Policy for more information.

Bag searches may be conducted by the Principal if staff have concerns that a student has a mobile phone on them that hasn't been placed into their pouch.

What if the Yondr pouch gets damaged?

Any attempt to tamper with the Yondr system, including use or possession of high-strength magnets will be treated as a **serious offence**, potentially resulting in a replacement fee of €15¹, confiscation of their device until collected by a Parent/Guardian and sanctions in line with our school policy.

If accidental damage occurs, students must report it immediately. If damage is discovered during checks and has not been reported, it may be considered **intentional**.

The pouch should not be used as a replacement for a protective case and/or screen protector on a mobile device.

We will be conducting random pouch/spot checks over the full academic year to assess the condition of pouches.

Emergencies

What if there is a school emergency?

In an emergency, the priority is for students to follow school safety procedures under staff guidance. Unauthorised phone use during such situations may:

- Delay emergency responses
- Spread misinformation
- Put students and staff at increased risk
- Disrupt coordinated safeguarding measures

Emergency communications will be managed through the school.

If you have any further questions, please don't hesitate to contact us.

Staff Guidance for Implementing the Mobile Phone Policy

Yondr Pouches Staff Information Sheet

This information sheet outlines the key benefits, procedures, and staff responsibilities for the Yondr pouch program.

Staff Benefits

- **Clear Boundaries:** Removes policy "grey areas" and establishes firm expectations.
- **Focus on Work:** Reduces time spent on phone-related distractions or disciplinary issues throughout the day.
- **Workplace Privacy:** Eliminates the fear of being recorded by students while working.
- **Improved Engagement:** Leads to higher student participation and engagement during class.
- **Reduced Truancy:** Decreases the number of students hiding in toilets to use their phones.
- **Conflict Resolution/Resilience:** Encourages students to resolve issues themselves rather than immediately texting parents or guardians thus building resilience.

Daily Procedures

Student Arrival to 9am clas

- Phones must be turned off or placed on airplane mode.
- Students must pouch their phones under teacher supervision at 9am.
- Ensure the top of the pouch is closed and the green button is pushed in to secure it.
- Students hold pouch **upside down** to show phone is in the pouch
- Teachers must be vigilant that the phone is being put in to the pouch and not another item e.g. calculator
- Current positive code of behaviour will still apply where students must have phones off on school grounds.

Student Dismissal

- The pouch is tapped on the unlocking base (side with the green circular ring) These are at points around the school (outside).
- The button should be pushed in by the student as it is tapped to release the lock.
- Students retrieve their phones and keep it in their possession.

Managing Exceptions & Issues

Forgotten Pouches

- Students must hand in their phones to the school office for the duration of the day.
- Phones are returned at dismissal.
- Consistent forgetfulness is treated as a lost pouch; parents will be notified, and a replacement will be provided at the student's expense of €15¹

Damage or Loss

- If a pouch is accidentally damaged or lost, staff will collect the phone/pouch and hand it into the office.
- A replacement fee of €15¹ will be charged to the student.

Unauthorized Access & Misconduct

- Unlocking a pouch without permission, damaging it, or using a "dummy/alternate" phone will result in immediate confiscation and disciplinary action as per policy.
- Refer students to Year Head/Jennifer/Sandra.

Emergency Situations

- In a schoolwide emergency, there will be portable unlocking stations to support students once it is safe.

Pouch Integrity & Checks

Please complete these in the morning:

What to Look For:

- **Physical Damage:** Scratches or scuffs on the black ball/button (indicates hitting against hard surfaces).
- **Cuts or Tears:** Small slits used to "wiggle" the phone out.
- **Markings:** Pen or pencil marks often indicate attempts to break the locking mechanism.
- **Prohibited Items:** Watch for students attempting to use magnets or bringing in "dummy" phones (usually old or broken devices).
- If in doubt send students to the office

Staff Guidance:

- **Model Expectations:** Staff should be mindful of their own phone usage to send a strong message of solidarity to students.
- **Restorative Conversations:** If challenged, engage students in discussions about phone dependency and the benefits of phone-free spaces.
- **Immediate Reporting:** Encourage students to report accidental damage immediately. Damage found during a formal check will be assumed purposeful so will be sanctioned as per policy.

Ratified on 15th April 2026

Signed: Chairperson *Niall Flynn*