**Mobile Phone and Personal Electronic Device Policy-Athlone Community College**

**Mission Statement**

Athlone Community College with the co-operation of its educational partners will continue to provide an environment where each student is cherished equally and is nurtured to a personal, intellectual and moral maturity. We are committed to creating an atmosphere of excellence in learning, challenging the pupils to reach their full potential. We will foster an appreciation of Arts, our national and European culture and the greater global environment. Our co-educational approach to learning places emphasis on equality of opportunity and offers flexibility in response to an ever-changing society.

Our philosophy of education is a Christian one embracing all creeds. We aspire to a holistic education encompassing the intellectual, moral, religious, personal, physical and social dimensions of our being.

Our ethos encourages a mutual respect for one another, where the joy of learning becomes a reciprocal experience.

**“Even while we teach we learn**

**Consultation**

This policy was formulated in consultation with the teaching staff and management of Athlone Community College, Parents Association, Student Council and the Board of Management (BOM).

**Scope of the Policy:**

This policy applies to all school related activities in and associated with Athlone Community College.

**Definition of items covered by this policy:**

Personal electronic equipment means: all phones, ipods, smart watches and all other devices which could be used to communicate with, record, film another individual, upload to internet or download from the internet. This policy also covers personal music equipment and any other equipment which could interfere with health and safety regulations, and could compromise the learning environment in Athlone Community College.

**Rationale:**

We accept the important part that electronic personal devices/mobile phone play in the life of our students and their importance as a means of maintaining contact with parents/guardians. However these electronic devices/phones have also posed major problems for all schools in relation to:

 Disruption of teaching and learning

 Invasion of the right to privacy of staff and students

 Bullying

 Truancy

 Discipline (e.g. arranging fights, illegal substance abuse, vandalism etc.)

 Recording objectionable material for display on the internet

This policy aims to maintain a safe, nurturing environment where the personal dignity and rights of all the members of the school community are preserved.

a) Where a student brings a personal electronic device and/or mobile phone to school, the device or phone must be **switched off and cannot be seen, used or heard during the school day (from 9am until 3:55)**.

**b) Students found breaking the above rule** may have **their personal electronic devices and/or phones, including SIM cards, confiscated for 7 days for the first offence, 2 weeks for the second offence and thereafter at the discretion of the Principal.**

c) No photographs can be taken or recordings, video or audio, made with personal electronic devices or mobile phones of any person on the school premises or grounds. Using devices or phones in such a way can seriously infringe a person’s rights and appropriate sanctions will be imposed. This will include the above sanction of having the phone confiscated as well as further sanctions.

d) A refusal by a student to hand over a mobile phone to a member of staff will result in a suspension. Any member of staff has the right to confiscate an electronic device/mobile phone, if the student is in breach of the policy.

e) Incidents where students use personal electronic devices or mobile phones to bully others or send offensive messages or calls will be investigated under the Anti-Bullying policy. In the event that a mobile phone or personal device is used inappropriately (e.g. inappropriate photos / recordings / texts) all the offending material will be deleted completely and parents/ guardians attend the school with their son or daughter for a meeting with the Principal to discuss the matter before the device is returned to the student. Suspension may also be imposed on the student. It should be noted that it is a criminal offence to use a device or mobile phone to menace, harass or offend another person. As such, the school may consider it appropriate to involve the Gardaí in such incidents.

f) The school accepts no responsibility for replacing lost, stolen or damaged personal electronic devices or mobile phones. Likewise the school does not take responsibility for investigating the loss or theft of such items. The safety and security of devices or mobile phones is wholly a matter for students / parents.

g) It is strongly advised that students mark their personal electronic devices or mobile phones with their names and use passwords to ensure that unauthorised phone calls cannot be made on their phones.

The school authorities request the total co-operation of parents/guardians in this matter as the policy is in place to ensure the health and safety of all school personnel and to provide the best possible environment in which teaching and learning can take place and where the personal dignity and rights of all the members of the school community are preserved. In order to assist the school in implementing this policy, parents/guardians are asked not to arrange to contact students by mobile phone at any time during the school day. Contact with the school may be made through the school office and students are requested to use the office phone in emergencies.

**Exemption 1**: A small number of our students use personal electronic devices for health reasons. Once a medical certificate is presented to management (at the beginning of the school year) to manage a medical condition (e.g. Type 1 Diabetes) permission will be granted on a case by case basis only. A record of students with this exemption will be kept by the Year Head. This exemption only applies to monitoring the named medical condition.

**Exemption 2**: Students may from time to time be allowed to use their smart phone in class for educational purposes. This is only allowed under the direction of the class teacher. Should a recording be made it is only for class/homework use it may not be shared on social media or other platforms.

**Review:**

The policy is subject to review every three years or earlier. Ratified March 2018

**Signed: ………………………………………………….**

**(for and on behalf of the Board of Management)**