Guidance on Developing Policies to Promote the Safe and Responsible Use of Mobile Technology in Schools

Vision

1. "To enable all schools and local authorities to develop an ethos of digital citizenship that leads to safe and responsible use of mobile technology. This will encourage schools to positively embrace mobile technology to enhance learning now and in the future whilst helping them protect staff, children and young people from possible harmful consequences of misuse."

Context

2. Mobile technology is an integral part of the lives of children and young people across Scotland, with many bringing their own mobile devices into school.

3. Used responsibly, mobile devices such as phones, tablets etc can enhance learning and teaching, communication and social experiences and can bring a sense of security to parents as their children enjoy more independent activities, such as walking to and from school unsupervised. Such devices can also be powerful tools when utilised by teachers to enhance learning and teaching.

4. There are risks associated with children and young people bringing their own personal mobile devices into schools. The *Behaviour in Scottish Schools Research 2012* highlighted cases of misuse, both in terms of low-level disruption in classes and more serious misuse such as bullying and harassment of children and young people and staff. Such behaviour is unacceptable in any context. The inappropriate use of this technology can also detract from their appropriate use in learning and can involve teaching staff, children and young people, and parents in investigations which require disproportionate amounts of time and can cause significant disruption to the school and wider community.

5. Stories relating to misuse of mobile technology are frequently reported in the media with many demonstrating the potentially devastating impact of such misuse on individuals and their families.

6. Taking into account both the potential benefits for learning and teaching from the existing context of increased ownership and usage, whilst considering the risk factors, it is unreasonable and impractical to attempt to impose a ban on mobile devices in schools. A different approach is required which promotes the safe and responsible use of mobile devices while encouraging schools to adopt a robust but measured response to the consequences of their inappropriate use. This will help staff, children and young people, and parents to enjoy the flexibility that mobile devices can provide, whilst helping them to feel safe and protected from harm, and reducing the likelihood of accessing inappropriate content.

7. The two key policy drivers, *Curriculum for Excellence* and *Getting it Right for Every Child* recognise that developing the wellbeing of staff and children and young people is essential for creating the right environment for effective learning and teaching through the Curriculum. Additionally, Scottish Ministers have made a clear commitment to recognising, respecting and promoting children's rights in Scotland. The Children and Young People Bill will ensure that children's rights, as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), properly influence the design and delivery of policies and services by placing new duties on Scottish Ministers and the public sector.

Purpose

8. The purpose of this guidance is to provide schools and local authorities with advice on how to develop local policies that encourage safe and responsible use of personal mobile technology in school, and beyond. These policies should also be designed to protect staff and children and young people from harassment and abuse which can arise from the misuse of such technology.

9. Historically, 'acceptable use' policies have had a focus on managing and controlling online behaviour. More recently, there has been a move towards the promotion of positive relationships and behaviour in a digital context. This shift recognises the important role of educators in preparing young people to become 'digital citizens'. It takes into account the fact that young people have extensive access to the internet through mobile devices outwith school.

10. This guidance has been developed by a working group established by the Scottish Advisory Group on Behaviour in Schools. It aims:

› To provide a set of guiding principles for schools and local authorities to consider when developing their own policies on safe and responsible use; rooted in the principles of 'Digital Citizenship', anti-bullying policies and the approaches to promoting positive relationships and behaviour outlined in *Better Relationships, Better Learning, Better Behaviour*.

› To emphasise that these principles could be mapped on to existing health and wellbeing experiences and outcomes, particularly those referring to social, emotional and mental wellbeing as well as relationships.

› To emphasise schools' responsibility for the health and wellbeing and safety of their staff and children and young people.

› To provide advice on how to develop local policies in partnership with the whole school community, engendering a sense of engagement, ownership and commitment.

› To provide advice on relevant legal aspects.

What do we mean by 'safe and responsible use of mobile technology'?

11. For children and young people, the internet is a place, not a thing. It's a social space where they can hang out and meet friends. Like any place that children and young people go, there are benefits and risks. We wouldn't expect children and young people to behave appropriately without guidance from adults in any other context.

12. Children and young people need to understand that unacceptable behaviour remains unacceptable whether it occurs in an online environment, the playground, the classroom or anywhere else. Expectations for responsible conduct remain consistent, regardless of the context, and any breach of expectations in relation to mobile technology should be treated in accordance with the school's behaviour policies. It is expected that staff will respond consistently to any irresponsible use of mobile technology and will explain to children why certain behaviours are unacceptable, and what the potential impact of such behaviours might be.

13. In line with this, policies on mobile technology must be rooted within existing positive relationships and behaviour policies, which will already set out how incidents will be dealt with. New policies must also be consistent with existing IT codes of conduct and must reference health and safety for staff and children and young people.

14. In order to promote digital citizenship, schools should consider how they will deliver learning and teaching about online behaviour and relationships. The key principles of digital citizenship that have an impact on use of mobile devices in schools include:

› digital etiquette (standards of conduct when using mobile devices);

› digital rights and responsibilities (what people can do if they feel uncomfortable with digital communication and how they can report misuse); and

› digital security (precautions that can be taken to ensure digital safety).

15. This learning links well to work going on in schools in developing responsible and global citizens, recognising and respecting children's rights, creating an anti-bullying culture and raising awareness of digital and online safety. This learning can be delivered through the Curriculum for Excellence and in particular through the Health and Wellbeing experiences and outcomes:

"The mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing of everyone within a learning community should be positively developed by fostering a safe, caring, supportive, purposeful environment that enables the development of relationships based on mutual respect."
(Curriculum for Excellence: Health and Wellbeing. Experiences and Outcomes)

16. Staff, pupil and parental confidence in the safe and responsible use of mobile technology in schools will lay the foundations for schools to confidently embrace technology as another learning tool in the future.

Policy development and implementation

17. Promotion of digital citizenship moves beyond compliant behaviour and involves commitment to responsible behaviour. Engaging the whole school community – staff, children and young people and parents – in policy development is the most effective means of ensuring engagement with, and commitment to, the policy. The policies should be regularly reviewed to ensure the commitment of new staff, children and young people and parents to the policy and to take account of new developments in technology.

18. Key themes that may form a framework for whole school community discussion and ultimate inclusion in such a policy include:

› Guidance regarding any restrictions on personal mobile device use within school grounds within the school day, at social events and on school outings. For example, it may be agreed that, unless they are being used in a lesson, mobile phones should be switched off and out of sight during lesson times.

› Clear guidelines on the appropriate use of mobile technology for learning and teaching purposes.

› Emphasis on the need for safe and responsible use of mobile technology by children and young people and staff outwith formal learning and teaching purposes.

› Clear guidelines on the need to respect privacy, which should include instructions that camera and filming functions must not be used without prior consent of subjects (children and young people or staff) and special permission of school management.

› Clear guidelines that images or recordings obtained by use of mobile phones should not be uploaded on social networking or other websites without the express permission of the subjects.

› Agreed consequences and sanctions for the misuse of mobile phones that are integrated with each school's existing policies and approaches to managing relationships and behaviour.

› Clear procedures for confiscation and return of mobile devices.

› Clear protocols on reporting of misuse within the school, and the support available in school for staff and for children and young people who are the subject of harassment using mobile phones.

› Consideration of situations where mobile phones may be used by children and young people with particular needs, for example, a young carer who is worried about the health of their parents.

› Clearly-stated responsibility/liability for personal mobile devices in terms of loss, theft or breakage.

› The range of ways that the policy will be shared with children and young people, parents and staff, for example in the Parent Handbook or school website.

Legal aspects

19. A full list of legislation relevant to all aspects of online safety, including the safe and responsible use of mobile technology, can be found in the annex (which is available at www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Education/Schools/HLivi/behaviour). This has been lifted from the accompanying guidance for the Scottish version of the e-safety self-review tool for schools, 360 Degree Safe, and will be kept under review and updated as necessary.

20. Regardless of specific legal aspects, staff, children and young people need to feel safe and protected. The school's policies on promoting positive relationships and behaviour and anti-bullying will provide a framework which should underpin responses to cases where mobile technologies have been, or are perceived to have been, misused.

21. Policies should make clear that there are consequences for misusing mobile technologies. In cases of extreme misuse where criminal events have been recorded using a mobile device, this immediately becomes a police matter and the school should place the device in the hands of the police without trying to access the contents.

22. Taking photographs or film/audio recordings of anyone without their permission may be regarded as a breach of a person's rights, which may be regarded in some instances by the police as a breach of the peace.

23. Should anyone choose to record images and then upload them onto social networks without permission from the person being recorded, the individual should be asked to remove this as part of the normal behaviour policy of the school. Schools may also approach social networks to request removal of inappropriate materials but the decision to do this lies with the social network provider.

Policies

› **Health and Wellbeing in Curriculum for Excellence:** www.educationscotland.gov.uk/learningteachingandassessment/curriculumareas/healthandwellbeing/index.asp

› **Getting it Right for Every Child:** www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Young-People/gettingitright

› **Better relationships, better learning, better behaviour:** The Scottish Advisory Group on Behaviour In Schools (SAGBIS) response to Behaviour in Scottish Schools Research 2013: www.scotland.gov.uk/publications/2013/03/7388

› **Included, engaged and involved part 2: a positive approach to managing school exclusions:** www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/03/17095258/0

Further resources

Advice, guidance and information

› GTCS **Professional Guidance on the Use of Electronic Communication and Social Media**
www.gtcs.org.uk/web/FILES/teacher-regulation/professional-guidance-ecomms-social-media.pdf

› **360 Degree Safe** is an online, interactive self review tool which allows schools to review
their e-safety policy and practice. www.360safeScotland.org.uk

› **Respectme** Scotland's Anti-Bullying Service. Information and advice on all aspects of bullying
for practitioners, parents and pupils: www.respectme.org.uk

› **Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre** (CEOP), UK police agency dedicated to
protecting children from sexual abuse www.ceop.police.uk

› **Think U Know** A website for young people and their parents/carers and teachers. Run by
the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) www.thinkuknow.co.uk

› **Childline** is the UK's free, confidential helpline dedicated to children and young people
www.childline.org.uk 0800 1111

› **Positive Relationships and Behaviour - Education Scotland** Links to information about
approaches to developing positive relationships and behaviour and contact details for
the Rights, Support and Wellbeing team: www.educationscotland.gov.uk/supportinglearners/
positivelearningenvironments/positivebehaviour/index.asp