

GPETNS Parents Pact: Smartphone Ownership & Social Media Use

The Parents of GPETNS are invited to enter into this pact as one measure available to parents to embed CyberSafe Ireland's online safety guidance in our school community. That guidance includes: doing fun stuff online but making sure parents do it together with their children, keeping a close eye on kids when they are online and introducing technology gradually (with delayed ownership being best practice) See www.cybersafeireland.org.

As parents we value communicating with and supporting each other in keeping our children safe online. Whether you choose to participate in this Pact or not, parents are encouraged to talk to each other about ensuring online safety for our children and championing best practice in applying parental controls and creating healthy habits. In 2019 it came to the attention of the PTA that many parents were concerned about the wider risks and pressures involved in (1) owning a smart phone and (2) accessing social media sites from any device. CyberSafe Ireland's 4th Annual Report (Sept 2019) highlights that 43% of 8 to 13 year olds surveyed speak to strangers online, with a third speaking to strangers every day or at least once a week and 36% of 8-year olds boys and 43% of 10 year old boys are playing over-18s games and being exposed to violent and sexual content that is not appropriate for their age. Parents' concerns also include the extent to which bullying happens online. A survey was conducted to ascertain support for a pact of this nature which attracted responses from 117 parents and over 80% support for the pact.

This Pact is supported by the PTA. It is separate to the school's own mobile phone policy on how mobile phone use and ownership is managed *during school time*. If you opt into this Pact (which is voluntary) you agree: (1) not to buy your child his/her own smartphone; and (2) not to allow your child to access their own social media account from any device. You are free to opt out of the Pact. The Pact will be reviewed by the PTA annually and GPETNS will consult with the children on the Pact in the senior cycle of the school.

What the pact is about	What the pact is not about
Choice parents often feel like they have to buy their child his/her own smartphone, despite concerns, just because other children have one. This Pact seeks to give parents in this school a chance to say no to that pressure, while the kids are very young.	Banning anything. This is a <i>pact</i> not a ban. Parents can if they wish agree to participate in this Pact if it works for them. There is no judgment of any parent for opting out of the Pact and it is recognised some parents may have good reason to do so.
Appropriate Supervision Getting the internet out of children's pockets and into shared family spaces. There is no restriction in this Pact on access to shared devices, which tend to be supervised in an open shared family space.	"dumb phones" that only access phone calls and SMS/text messages. These can be owned by the children and used for arranging picks ups, drop offs, extra-curricular activities and childcare without any need to opt out of this Pact.
Education. As parents who have taken up this Pact we commit to educating ourselves and the children about the wonders and benefits of modern technology as well as the potential dangers and downsides.	Ownership of a games consoles or Tablet Parents can discuss if they want to extend the pact to sole ownership/use of a tablet, for example, on a per class basis, separate to this Pact.
Consultation The PTA will consult parents on this Pact on an annual basis recognising that technology evolves and so do the requirements of the schoolchildren. Parents are encouraged to talk about the Pact on a per class basis and discuss what works for them.	Discouraging access to technology We encourage computer literacy and the amazing access to learning that smart devices can bring with them when used wisely; but we also recognise that scrolling is not coding.