

Mobile Phones and Smart Devices Policy 2025 - 2027 St John's C of E Middle School Academy



This policy is reviewed and updated by Kate Gallinagh, Deputy Headteacher at St John's Middle School. It is approved annually by the Local Governing Body.

This policy has been written based on the guidance in the following publications:

- Mobile Phones in Schools (Statutory Guidance) - Department for Education, June 2026
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026
- Behaviour in Schools - DfE, February 2024
- Online Safety Act - UK Government, October 2023
- Searching, Screening and Confiscation in Schools - DfE, February 2023
- Teaching Online Safety in Schools - DfE, January 2023
- RSHE Statutory Guidance 2026
- Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026

This policy works in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Positive Behaviour for Learning and Relationships Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Ratified: **September 2025**

Updated: **September 2026**

Next Review: **September 2027**



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1 Introduction

Government Guidance

The Department for Education's statutory guidance, *Mobile Phones in Schools (2026)*, states that schools should be mobile phone-free environments by default and should prohibit the use of mobile phones and other smart devices throughout the school day, including lessons, breaktimes, lunchtimes and movement around school, except where specific exemptions apply.

The document makes the following statements:

- Every school has a duty to create an environment that is calm, safe and free from distraction so all pupils, whatever their background, can learn and thrive. One of the greatest challenges facing schools is the presence of mobile phones and smart devices.
- mobile phones and smart devices risk unnecessary distraction, disruption and diversion.
- This action [prohibiting the use of mobile devices] goes alongside wider intervention to protect children from online harms outside of school too, with a vital role also for parents and carers, as well as the responsibilities of social media platforms and internet service providers.
- A school may decide that its pupils may require access to their mobile phones and smart devices before and after school, but they do not want pupils to have access to their mobile phones and smart devices throughout the school day.

Purpose of the Policy

For the purposes of this policy, references to mobile phones and smart devices also include smart watches, internet-enabled communication devices and other smart devices capable of sending or receiving messages, notifications, images, audio or video recordings unless specifically exempted by the school.

- The use of mobile phones and smart devices during the school day risks unnecessary distraction, disruption and diversion.
- Being a middle school, catering for children aged 9 to 13, the vast majority of whom walk to school by themselves, we acknowledge that a number of parents wish for their children to have their mobile phones/smart devices with them before and after school in order to ensure their safety during their journey home.
- To educate the children of St John's Middle School on the possible risks of mobile phone/smart devices use and to ensure that the necessary support is given to parents to help protect their children when using mobile phones or smart devices out of school hours.
- To ensure all necessary steps are taken to guarantee the safeguarding of all pupils from risk during the school day.
- To minimise safeguarding risks associated with personal devices, including cyberbullying, inappropriate communication, unauthorised recording, exposure to harmful content and breaches of privacy.
- The school recognises that personal devices can present safeguarding risks. All members of the school community share a responsibility to help maintain a safe, respectful and distraction-free learning environment.

Definition and Scope

This policy applies to all pupils, staff, volunteers, governors, contractors and visitors.

For the purposes of this policy, "mobile phones and smart devices" includes:

- Mobile phones and smartphones
- Smartwatches
- Tablets with mobile or internet connectivity
- Earbuds or wearable devices with communication functions
- AI-enabled wearable technology
- Any personal device capable of taking photographs, recording audio/video, connecting to the internet or communicating with others
- Where smart devices have similar functionality to a mobile phone, they will be subject to the same expectations and restrictions outlined within this policy.

2 Online Safety Education

It is the duty of schools to educate a child on the potential dangers and risks of going online. As set out in Teaching Online Safety in Schools, and detailed in more depth in our Online Safety Policy, it is important to focus on the underpinning knowledge and behaviours that can help pupils to navigate the online world safely and confidently regardless of the device, platform or app. This teaching is:

- covered within PSHE
- covered within specific online safety lessons in computing
- covered using school-wide approaches such as assemblies and Online Safety Week

With specific regard to mobile phones and smart devices, children are taught about:

- Screen time and persuasive design
- Privacy settings and digital footprints
- Cyberbullying and online harassment
- Online exploitation and coercion
- Misinformation and disinformation
- AI-generated content and associated risks
- Responsible social media use
- Safe sharing of images, recordings and personal information
- Age-appropriate use of apps and online services

The benefits of mobile technology are also discussed and the positive impacts mobile and smart devices have on society are considered.

Additionally, any child found not following the procedures set out in this policy will, alongside the appropriate sanction, receive one-to-one advice and conversation around the reasons for the policy and procedures that are in place. These conversations will focus on online safety aspects, as well as the need to remove phones from school life in order to reduce unnecessary distraction, disruption and diversion.

3 Mobile Phone and Smart Devices: Pupils

Procedures

At St John's Middle School, we have elected for a *mobile phone handed in on arrival* approach. The intention of this approach is that it allows children and parents/carers to have communication and peace of mind before and after school, but also removes the unnecessary distraction, disruption and diversion that allowing phones during the school day could have.

The following bullet points set out the agreed procedures a family and child must follow when it is agreed that a child is to bring a mobile phone to school.

- A child may bring only one mobile phone to school.
- Phones must be switched off before entering the school building and remain switched off until they have been collected at the end of the school day and the pupil has left the school site.
- Before the start of the school day, the phone should be stored safely away and out of sight until handed to a member of staff.
- At the start of the school day, the phone must be handed in during morning registration.
- The phone is collected at the end of the school day.
- The phone must remain powered off and stored safely away until it is off the school grounds.
- The new DfE guidance does give staff legal protection from liability for loss/damage to confiscated items where they have acted lawfully.

Smartwatches and connected devices are subject to the requirements outlined in Section 3.04.

Sanctions

Following the guidance in the DfE's Behaviour in Schools and Mobile Phones in Schools documentation, the following sanctions are in place for any child that does not follow the procedures set out above:

- Any mobile phone found not to be handed in will result in a D5: 45 minute afterschool intervention.
- If a phone is visible or used during the school day, then it will result in a sanction in line with the school behaviour policy
- Parents will be notified of the above via Epraise.

Authorised members of staff may confiscate mobile phones and smart devices in accordance with current legislation and Department for Education guidance, including Searching, Screening and Confiscation.

Furthermore:

- On the first occasion the mobile phone policy is breached, the phone will be confiscated and locked in the safe for collection by the child at the end of the day.
- On the second occasion, the phone is kept until collected by the parent - a call will be made to inform the parent of this.
- A third time would result in the child being unable to bring the phone to school.

More serious breaches:

- Any unauthorised photography, video recording or audio recording of pupils, staff or visitors will be treated as a serious safeguarding matter and may result in additional sanctions in line with the Behaviour Policy, Safeguarding Policy and, where appropriate, police involvement.
- Should a pupil upload material taken whilst in school to any form of social media they will not be allowed to bring a phone to school for the remainder of that term. The matter may also be referred to the police should the content of the upload further breach safeguarding measures.

Loss, Theft and Damage

An additional benefit of the procedures set out in this policy is that it almost completely removes the risk of potential damage, loss or theft. If a child breaches the policy and an issue occurs then school cannot be held responsible for the damage, loss or theft that occurs.

In the event of an issue arising due to a policy breach, school staff will endeavour to use the available resources and time available to assist, however ultimate responsibility for the device remains with the parent/carer. Any other child found stealing or intentionally causing damage to another child's property will face sanctions in line with our Positive Behaviour for Learning and Relationships Policy, including possible police involvement.

Smart Watches and Connected Devices

Smart watches and other connected devices capable of communication, taking photographs, making recordings or receiving notifications are subject to the same restrictions as mobile phones.

Pupils must hand these devices in alongside their mobile phones at the beginning of the school day unless an agreed medical exemption applies.

Fitness trackers without communication or recording capabilities may be worn at the discretion of school leaders.

4 Mobile Phones and Smart Devices: Staff

Staff are not permitted to use their mobile devices in front of pupils throughout the school day, either for personal or work purposes.

Exceptions to this include members of the Senior Leadership Team, Safeguarding Team, Site Manager, PE Department (when on the field), and the First Aid Team, where it is acknowledged that instant and reliable communication is essential for the safe and effective running of the school.

Staff members who are required to use their mobile phone on the school site as part of their role must complete and sign the School Mobile Usage Form. The form can be found in the school office and once completed, needs to be handed to the DSL. Where appropriate, these permitted members of staff will use their mobile devices away from children and only when necessary.

All staff are reminded of their safeguarding obligations:

- The use of personal mobile devices to take digital images or recordings of any child is strictly prohibited.
- Staff must not communicate with pupils using personal telephone numbers, personal email addresses or personal social media accounts.

- Communication with pupils and families must take place through approved school systems and channels.
- Staff should ensure that personal mobile devices used on school premises are secured using passwords, PINs or biometric authentication.

These protocols are further outlined in the Staff Code of Conduct Policy.

5. Mobile Phones and Smart Devices: Visitors and Volunteers

All volunteers and visitors are not permitted to use their mobile devices in front of pupils throughout the school day - either for personal or work purposes.

Visitors wishing to take photographs, videos or recordings must obtain prior permission from the Headteacher or designated member of staff.

Visitors who are found to be using personal devices inappropriately may be asked to stop, leave the premises or be reported in accordance with safeguarding procedures.

All volunteers and visitors are made aware of their safeguarding obligations and the use of personal mobile devices to take digital images or recordings of any child is strictly prohibited.

6. Mobile Phones and Smart Devices on Educational Visits

Day Visits

The vast majority of school trips take place during school hours. Children will arrive at school at the usual time and return to school before the end of the school day. On these occasions, the usual school procedures and sanctions are in place - phones will be handed in on arrival and collected at the end of the school day.

Visits Outside School Hours

Occasionally a trip will involve a start or finish outside of the normal school hours. On these occasions, a separate trips/ fixtures box will be used to store the mobile phone. The same sanctions apply as the main policy for any child breaching the policy.

Residential Visits

A residential trip is defined as any trip that involves an overnight stay. On these occasions, as with out of school hours trips, the designated trip leader will take responsibility, or assign responsibility, to another member of staff to collect the phones and return them to the children at the end of the trip.

On some residential trips, there may be an opportunity for the children to have their mobile phones in order to make contact with parents/carers. These opportunities will be determined on a trip by trip basis and will take into account such factors as length of time away, the lack of available mobile signal or wifi access, electricity access, and behaviour and attitudes of the group.

Reasonable adjustments may be made for a child with a specific medical or wellbeing need. These will need to be discussed and agreed upon before the trip by the parent/carer and school.

Staff, Volunteers and Visitors

During school trips, all staff, volunteers and visitors are permitted to use their mobile phones. However, the use should, where possible, be out of sight of the children. The use of a mobile phone must not distract from, or cause detrimental impact to any staff members, volunteers or visitors duty of care for the children and other adults' safety, wellbeing and educational benefit on the trip.

7. The Role of Parent and Carers

Parents have an important role in supporting the school's policy on prohibiting the use of mobile phones and are encouraged to reinforce and discuss the policy at home as appropriate, including the risks associated with mobile phone use and the benefits of a mobile phone-free environment.

If a parent needs to contact their child during the school day, whether their child is on the school site or on a trip, they are directed to the school office, where staff will relay messages and facilitate contact as appropriate.

8. Data Protection and Privacy

- Personal devices must not be used to capture, store or distribute images, video recordings or audio recordings of pupils, staff or visitors without appropriate authorisation.
- Any incident involving unauthorised recording, sharing of content or misuse of personal information will be investigated in accordance with the school's Safeguarding Policy, Behaviour Policy and Data Protection procedures.
- The school expects all members of the community to respect the privacy and dignity of others when using digital technology.

9. Searching, Screening and Confiscation

Headteachers, or staff authorised by the Headteacher, have statutory powers to search pupils or their possessions where there are reasonable grounds to suspect that a pupil is in possession of a prohibited item or an item identified in the school rules as an item that may be searched for.

Mobile phones and other smart devices covered by this policy are identified within the school's Behaviour Policy as items that may be searched for where the relevant legal conditions are met.

Any search will be conducted in accordance with the Department for Education guidance Searching, Screening and Confiscation in Schools and the school's Behaviour Policy.

Staff must follow the legal requirements concerning who may conduct a search, the presence of a witness, the circumstances in which a search may take place and the recording and notification of searches.

10. Reasonable Adjustments

Whilst it is our intention to prohibit the use of mobile phones throughout the school day to reduce distraction, disruption and diversion, we acknowledge our duty to make reasonable adjustments where necessary.

There may be exceptional circumstances where we may consider making adaptations to our policy for specific pupils. This section of the policy does not provide an exhaustive list of exceptional circumstances, and we will assess each case on its own merits.

We have a duty under the Equality Act 2010 to take such steps as is reasonable to avoid substantial disadvantage to a disabled pupil caused by the school's policies or practices. Allowing a disabled pupil access to their mobile phone during the school day, where it is necessary due to the nature of their disability, may be considered a reasonable adjustment.

All schools have a duty under the Children and Families Act 2014 to have arrangements in place to support pupils with medical conditions. In meeting this duty the senior leaders will take into account the statutory guidance supporting pupils with medical conditions at school. In some circumstances, supporting a pupil with their medical condition may involve the use of a mobile phone. For example, pupils with diabetes might use continuous glucose monitoring with a sensor linked to their mobile phone to monitor blood sugar levels. Where mobile phone use allows pupils to manage their medical condition effectively, it would not be reasonable for school to prevent this.

Beyond these specific duties, we recognise that a need for mobile phone access for some pupils may depend on their individual circumstances, including at home. We also acknowledge other factors that may prevent a child from being able to meet the procedures for handing in their mobile phone as outlined in this policy.

In these situations, we may allow flexibility to our policy and may consider alternative arrangements as required. These arrangements will be discussed and agreed with parents/carers as required.

Reasonable adjustments may include alternative storage arrangements, the use of medical monitoring equipment linked to a mobile device, communication aids, assistive technology or other individually agreed arrangements.

Allowing flexibility for individual pupils does not necessarily exempt them from all elements of this policy. Expectations and arrangements will be determined on a case-by-case basis and reviewed regularly.

11. Monitoring and Review

The Headteacher and Local Governing Body will monitor implementation of this policy and review its effectiveness in light of changes to legislation, statutory guidance, safeguarding requirements and local school needs.

The policy will be reviewed at least every two years, or sooner where required.