Southwark Diocesan
Board of Education
Multi-Academy Trust

MOBILE PHONE POLICY

Part of the 2026/2027 Trust Operating Manual

MOBILE PHONE POLICY

Contents

1. INTRODUCTION AND AIMS 2
2. RELEVANT GUIDANCE 2
3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES 2
4. USE OF MOBILE PHONES BY STAFF 2
5. USE OF MOBILE PHONES BY PUPILS 4
6. USE OF MOBILE PHONES BY PARENTS/CARERS, VOLUNTEERS AND VISITORS 6
7. LOSS, THEFT OR DAMAGE 7
8. MONITORING AND REVIEW 8

APPENDIX 1: [CODE OF CONDUCT / ACCEPTABLE USE AGREEMENT] FOR PUPILS ALLOWED TO BRING THEIR PHONES TO SCHOOLDUE TO EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES 9

APPENDIX 2: PERMISSION FORM ALLOWING A PUPIL TO BRING THEIR PHONE TO SCHOOL 10

APPENDIX 3: TEMPLATE MOBILE PHONE INFORMATION SLIP FOR VISITORS 11

MOBILE PHONE POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION AND AIMS

1.1 At [school name], our policy aims to:

(a) Ensure our environment is mobile phone-free by default

(b) Ensure the safe, responsible and lawful use of mobile phones, where applicable

(c) Provide clear guidelines for the use of mobile phones for pupils, staff, parents/carers, visitors and volunteers

(d) Support the school's other policies, especially those related to child protection and behaviour

Adapt the last statement above to refer to the relevant school policies, or include a list of these at the end of the policy.

1.2 This policy also aims to address some of the challenges posed by mobile phones in school, such as:

(a) Risks to child protection

(b) Data protection issues

(c) Risk of theft, loss or damage

(d) Appropriate use of technology for learning purposes

1.3 Note: throughout this policy, 'mobile phones' refers to mobile phones and similar devices.

2. RELEVANT GUIDANCE

2.1 This policy meets the requirements of section 36 of the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026, and the Department for Education (DfE)'s mobile phone guidance and behaviour guidance. Further guidance that should be considered alongside this policy includes Keeping Children Safe in Education, which sets out the expectation that all schools should be mobile phone-free environments by default.

3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 Staff

3.1.1. All staff (including teachers, support staff and supply staff) are required to actively enforce this policy and challenge any breach of mobile phone restrictions immediately and consistently.

3.1.2 Volunteers, or anyone else otherwise engaged by the school, must alert a member of staff if they witness, or are aware of, a breach of this policy.

3.1.3 The [relevant staff member, usually the headteacher or pastoral lead] is responsible for monitoring the policy and reviewing it every [number] years, and holding staff and pupils accountable for its implementation.

3.1.4 Staff will address any questions or concerns from parents/carers quickly, and clearly communicate the reasons for prohibiting the use of mobile phones.

3.2 Governors

3.2.1. If your governors are involved in monitoring or reviewing this policy, explain how here. Otherwise, delete this section.

4. USE OF MOBILE PHONES BY STAFF

The DfE's mobile phone guidance says that staff should not use their own mobile phone for personal reasons in front of pupils throughout the school day. All schools should be mobile phone-free environments by default: anything other than this should be by exception only.

The text below is an example only and you should adapt it to suit your specific needs.

4.1 Personal mobile phones

4.1.1 Staff (including volunteers, contractors and anyone else otherwise engaged by the school) are not permitted to use their personal mobile phone during the school day, [while pupils are present / during contact time]. Use of personal mobile phones must be restricted to non-contact time, and to areas of the school where pupils are not present (such as the staffroom).

4.1.2 There may be circumstances in which it's appropriate for a member of staff to have use of their phone during contact time, for personal reasons. For instance (this list is non-exhaustive):

(a) For emergency contact by their child, or their child's school

(b) In the case of acutely ill dependents or family members

The headteacher will decide on a case-by-basis whether to allow for special arrangements.

If special arrangements are not deemed necessary, school staff can use the school office number [insert number] as a point of emergency contact.

4.2 Data protection

4.2.1 Staff must not use their personal mobile phones to process personal data, or any other confidential school information, including entering such data into generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools such as chatbots (e.g. ChatGPT and Google Gemini).

4.2.2 Include information here about where more detailed guidance on data protection can be found. For instance, your school's data protection policy or ICT acceptable use policy.

4.3 Safeguarding

4.3.1 Staff must not give their personal contact details to parents/carers or pupils, including by connecting through social media and messaging apps.

4.3.2 Staff must avoid publicising their contact details on any social media platform or website, to avoid unwanted contact by parents/carers or pupils.

4.3.3. If your school includes similar details about connecting with parents/carers or pupils over messaging apps or social media in your ICT acceptable use or online safety policies, you should cross-reference those policies here.]

4.3.3 Staff must not use their personal mobile phones to take photographs or recordings of pupils, their work, or anything else that could identify a pupil. If it's necessary to take photos or recordings as part of a lesson / school trip / activity, this must be done using school equipment.

4.3.4 If your school uses classroom apps or programmes that require the use of a member of staff's mobile phone, you should explain the appropriate use of mobile phones in these circumstances.

4.3.5 Likewise, if you allow staff to use their phones to access the internet, explain your policy for this.

4.4 Using personal mobiles for work purposes

4.4.1 In some circumstances, it may be appropriate for staff to use personal mobile phones or a similar device during the school day in front of pupils for work. Such circumstances may include, but are not limited to:

(a) Issuing homework, rewards or sanctions

(b) Use of multi-factor authentication

(c) Emergency evacuations

(d) Supervising off-site trips

(e) Supervising residential visits

(f) [Link to your policy on educational visits, if relevant.]

4.4.2 [Consider: allowing staff to use personal mobile phones when supervising residential visits or school trips, and making their contact details available to pupils and parents/carers. Could you provide a school mobile instead, or a SIM card with a separate number?]

In these circumstances, staff will:

(g) Use their mobile phones in an appropriate and professional manner, in line with our staff code of conduct

(h) Not use their phones to take photographs or recordings of pupils, their work, or anything else that could identify a pupil

(i) Refrain from using their phones to contact parents/carers. If necessary, contact must be made via the school office

4.5 Work phones

If your school provides mobile phones to members of staff as equipment for their role, amend this section as appropriate. Otherwise, delete it and re-number the sub-section below.

4.5.1 Some members of staff are provided with a mobile phone by the school for work purposes.

4.5.2 Only authorised staff are permitted to use school phones, and access to the phone must not be provided to anyone without authorisation.

4.5.3 Staff must:

(a) Only use school phone functions for work purposes, including making/receiving calls, sending/receiving emails or other communications, or using the internet

(b) Make sure that all communication and conduct linked to the device is appropriate and professional at all times, in line with our staff code of conduct

4.6 Sanctions

Staff that fail to adhere to this policy may face disciplinary action.

See the school's staff disciplinary policy for more information.

5. USE OF MOBILE PHONES BY PUPILS

The DfE's mobile phone guidance says that the use of mobile phones should be prohibited throughout the school day.

The text below is an example only and you should adapt it to suit your specific needs.

5.0.1 Pupils must not use their mobile phones during the school day, including during lessons, in the time between lessons, at breaktimes and at lunchtimes, unless explicitly authorised by a member of staff (for example, for a specific medical reason).

5.0.2 Explain your school's approach to pupils bringing mobile phones to school. Consider:

(a) Banning mobile phones from school premises altogether

(b) Staff collecting mobile phones on arrival

(c) Pupils keeping mobile phones in a secure location, such as in lockers or locked pouches

You should be sure that any approach you choose is both lawful and practical for your school to implement and monitor.

It should allow flexibility to support pupils with specific medical needs (for example, for diabetic pupils who use continuous glucose monitoring systems that connect to a smart device).

If you are a residential school, insert links to relevant policies about the use of mobile phones outside of the teaching day

5.0.3 Pupils will be taught the risks that are associated with the use of mobile phones, both in school and more broadly, to make sure they understand the decision to prohibit the use of mobile phones throughout the school day. These risks can include a loss of focus in lessons, classroom disruption and an increase in bullying. Pupils will be encouraged to see a mobile-phone free environment as desirable and valuable.

5.1 Use of smartwatches by pupils

5.1.1. The DfE's statutory mobile phones guidance includes in the term 'mobile phones' all devices with communications and smart technology that the school chooses to include in its policy.

5.1.2 Smartwatches are wristwatches with smart technology in them. They can be used to tell the time, send and receive text and voice messages, make calls and listen to music. Some smartwatches have wellness and health-related features.

5.1.3 Explain your school's approach to bringing smartwatches to school, and how you'll enforce prohibiting their use throughout the teaching day. This might be similar to your approach to mobile phones set out above, but consider the following:

(d) Pupils may be able to use a smartwatch to communicate via text, even if their phone is secured elsewhere

(e) Smartwatches are often smaller than mobile phones and at a distance look similar to regular watches, so might be easier to conceal

(f) Smartwatches can be more fragile than mobile phones, so any confiscation / storage procedures may need to be modified to safely accommodate them

5.2 Exceptions for special circumstances

5.2.1 Consider whether:

- Some pupils are allowed to bring a mobile phone to be used on their journey to and from school (if you ban them from the premises). For example, pupils travelling to school by themselves
- Some pupils will be permitted to possess, or use, a mobile phone/smart device in school

For instance:

- Young carers who need to be contactable
- Pupils with diabetes who use their phones to monitor their blood glucose levels
- Sixth-form pupils

5.2.2 If some pupils are allowed to use mobile phones / smart devices due to exceptional circumstances, adapt and insert:

The school may permit pupils to use a mobile phone in school, due to exceptional circumstances or if they are in the school's sixth form.

5.2.3 In the case of permission due to exceptional circumstances, permission will only be granted where there is a documented safeguarding or medical necessity. To request such permission, pupils or parents/carers should contact [insert name and contact details].

5.2.4 Any pupils who are given permission must then adhere to the school's [code of conduct / acceptable use agreement] for mobile phone use (see appendix 1).

5.2.5 If you allow the use of mobile phones by sixth-form pupils, adapt and insert:

Sixth-form pupils are allowed access to their mobile phones during the school day, to reflect their increased independence and responsibility, but must not compromise our policy on the use of mobile phones for other pupils.

Therefore, they are only permitted to use their mobile phones or smart devices out of sight of younger pupils, and [insert permitted locations and times]. Misuse of mobile phones or other devices by pupils in the sixth form will lead to sanctions according to our behaviour policy.

5.3 Sanctions

5.3.1. Explain the sanctions you will use if a pupil is in breach of this policy.

For example:

(a) Will mobile phones be confiscated? (Schools are permitted to confiscate phones from pupils under sections 91 and 94 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006)

(b) If they are confiscated, who is allowed to collect them, and when? What is the process for this? (Headteachers can confiscate mobile phones and similar devices for the length of time they deem proportionate, according to the DfE's guidance on mobile phones in schools)

(c) How do the sanctions for mobile phone use link with your school's wider behaviour policy?

5.3.2. You may also wish to explain that staff have the power to search pupils' phones in specific circumstances, as set out in the DfE's guidance on searching, screening and confiscation. The DfE guidance allows you to search a pupil's phone if there is a good reason to do so (such as having reason to believe the phone contains pornographic images, or if it is being / has been used to commit an offence or cause harm to another person).

Be as detailed as possible so that staff, pupils and parents/carers all understand what steps should and will be taken if inappropriate content is found on a phone, or if inappropriate behaviour is suspected.

In each case, the sanction given must be reasonable and proportionate. The school will also consider whether:

There are any relevant special circumstances (for example, age, religious requirements, special educational needs (SEN), disability)

The pupil's behaviour may indicate they may be suffering, or at risk of, harm. If this is suspected, staff will follow the appropriate procedure set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education. This will include speaking with the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) or deputy, who will consider whether pastoral support, an early intervention, or a referral to children's social care is appropriate

5.3.3. Depending on the age of your pupils, you may also wish to add:

Certain types of conduct, bullying or harassment can be classified as criminal conduct. The school takes such conduct extremely seriously and will involve the police or other agencies as appropriate.

Such conduct includes, but is not limited to:

(d) Making of or sharing nudes and semi-nudes including images that are digitally altered or wholly generated using AI (such as 'deepfakes' or 'deep nudes')

(e) Upskirting

(f) Threats of violence or assault

(g) Abusive calls, emails, social media posts or texts directed at someone on the basis of someone's ethnicity, religious beliefs or sexual orientation

6. USE OF MOBILE PHONES BY PARENTS/CARERS, VOLUNTEERS AND VISITORS

Adapt this section as necessary. For instance, if you only allow staff to use phones in staff-only areas of the school, consider how and when parents/carers, volunteers and visitors may use their phones if they don't have access to these areas.

6.1 Parents and carers are encouraged to reinforce and discuss this policy at home as appropriate, including the risks associated with mobile phone use and the benefits of a mobile phone-free environment.

6.2 Parents/carers, visitors and volunteers (including governors and contractors) must adhere to this policy as it relates to staff if they are on the school site during the school day.

This means:

(a) Not taking pictures or recordings of pupils, unless it's at a public event (such as a school fair), or of their own child

(b) Using any photographs or recordings for personal use only, and not posting on social media without consent

(c) Not using phones in lessons, when working with pupils or while children are present

6.3 Parents/carers, visitors and volunteers will be informed of the rules for mobile phone use when they sign in at reception or attend a public event at school.

6.3.1 Include more detail here based on your school's procedures. For example, if you will provide a copy of this policy, or a summary of the rules, include this detail here.

6.3.2 Parents/carers or volunteers supervising school trips or residential visits must not:

(a) Use their phone to make contact with other parents/carers

(b) Take photos or recordings of pupils, their work, or anything else that could identify a pupil

6.3.3 Parents/carers or volunteers supervising trips are also responsible for enforcing the school's policy for pupils using their phones, but must refer any proposed sanctions to a member of staff, as they do not have the power to search or confiscate devices.

6.3.4 Parents/carers must use the school office as the first point of contact if they need to get in touch with their child during the school day. They must not try to contact their child on their personal mobile during the school day.

7. LOSS, THEFT OR DAMAGE

7.1 If you allow pupils to bring phones to school, insert:

Pupils bringing mobile phones to school must make sure that their phones are appropriately labelled, ready to be stored away securely [insert details of phone storage] when not in use during the school day.

7.2 You should include details of how you would like pupils to label their phones and update the code of conduct in appendix 1 to also include these details.

7.3 Pupils must secure their mobile phones as much as possible, including using passwords or pin codes to protect access to the phone's functions. Staff must also secure their personal phones, as well as any work phone provided to them. Failure by staff to do so could result in data breaches.

All schools continue with:

7.4 The school accepts no responsibility for mobile phones that are lost, damaged or stolen on school premises or transport, during school visits or trips, or while pupils are travelling to or from school.

7.5 Explain how you will make sure pupils and parents/carers are aware of the disclaimer above. For example, you could:

(a) Put signs up in the school entrance or office

(b) Include disclaimers in your permission forms for bringing a phone to school

(c) Include a disclaimer in your home-school agreement (if you have one)

(d) Provide a copy of your policy and disclaimer to new pupils and parents/carers

7.6 If your school confiscates phones from pupils, add:

Confiscated phones will be stored in the [school office / other appropriate location] in [a secure location / locked cabinet].

Schools that confiscate phones from pupils become responsible for the phone and can be held responsible for loss, theft or damage. Adapt the statement above to explain where and how confiscated phones will be stored and who is responsible for them.

7.7 All schools continue with:

Lost phones should be returned to [insert appropriate person or office]. The school will then attempt to contact the owner.

8. MONITORING AND REVIEW

8.1 The school is committed to making sure that this policy has a positive impact on pupils' education, behaviour and welfare. When reviewing the policy, the school will take into account:

(a) Feedback from parents/carers and pupils

(b) Feedback from staff

(c) Records of behaviour and safeguarding incidents

(d) Relevant advice from the DfE, the local authority and any other relevant organisations

8.2 If there are any concerns regarding this policy, these should be brought to the attention of [name/role and contact details] in a timely manner.

8.3 You don't have to have your governors approve this policy. But if you want them to, explain their role in this section.

APPENDIX 1: [CODE OF CONDUCT / ACCEPTABLE USE AGREEMENT] FOR PUPILS ALLOWED TO BRING THEIR PHONES TO SCHOOLDUE TO EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

[Pupil code of conduct / acceptable use agreement]

Adapt this agreement to reflect your school's approach as set out in section 5. You may also need to adapt the language to suit the age of your pupils.

You must obey the following rules if you bring your mobile phone to school:

1. You may not use your mobile phone throughout the school day, including lesson times, in between lessons, breaktime and lunchtime, unless a teacher specifically allows you to for a specific reason.
2. Phones must be switched off (not just put on 'silent').
3. You may not use your mobile phone in the toilets or changing rooms. This is to protect the privacy and welfare of other pupils.
4. You cannot take photos or recordings (either video or audio) of school staff or other pupils.
5. Avoid sharing your contact details with people you don't know, and don't share other people's contact details without their consent.
6. Don't share your phone's password(s) or access code(s) with anyone else.
7. Don't use your mobile phone to bully, intimidate or harass anyone or otherwise to act in breach of the school's [behaviour policy]. This includes bullying, harassing or intimidating pupils or staff via:
    a. Email
    b. Text/messaging app
    c. Social media
8. Don't use your phone to send or receive anything that may be a criminal offence. For instance, by making or sharing nudes or semi-nudes (including AI-generated images or 'deepfakes')
9. Rules on bullying, harassment and intimidation apply to how you use your mobile phone even when you aren't in school.
10. Don't use vulgar, obscene or derogatory language while on the phone or when using social media. This language is not permitted under the school's behaviour policy.
11. Don't use your phone to view or share pornography or other harmful content.
12. You must comply with a request by a member of staff to switch off, or hand over, a phone. Refusal to comply is a breach of the school's behaviour policy and will be dealt with accordingly.
13. Mobile phones are not permitted in any internal or external exam or test environment. If you have a mobile phone, you will be asked to store it appropriately, or turn it over to an exam invigilator, before entering the test room. Bringing a phone into the test room can result in your exam being declared invalid.

APPENDIX 2: PERMISSION FORM ALLOWING A PUPIL TO BRING THEIR PHONE TO SCHOOL

Use this form if you don't normally allow pupils to bring their phones to school, but are granting an exception.

It should be signed by parents/carers. In secondary schools, it may also be appropriate to get pupils to sign.

PUPIL DETAILS	
Pupil name:	
Year group/class:	
Parent/carer(s) name(s):	

The school has agreed to allow [pupil name] to bring [their] mobile phone to school because they:

List the appropriate reasons here. We've listed some common reasons below (you can delete as required):

- Travel to and from school alone
- Are a young carer
- Need the phone to support their medical needs
- Are attending a school trip or residential where use of mobile phones will be allowed
- Attend a before- or after-school activity where a mobile phone is required for the activity, or to contact parents/carers

Pupils who bring a mobile phone to school must abide by the school's policy on the use of mobile phones, and its [code of conduct / acceptable use agreement].

The school reserves the right to revoke permission if a pupil does not abide by the policy.

Parent/carer signature: _____

Pupil signature (where appropriate): _____

1.

FOR SCHOOL USE ONLY	
Authorised by:	
Date:	

APPENDIX 3: TEMPLATE MOBILE PHONE INFORMATION SLIP FOR VISITORS

Print out and cut copies of this slip to give to visitors when they arrive at your school. Adapt the template to reflect section 6 of this policy.

Use of mobile phones and similar devices in our school

Our school is a mobile phone-free environment.

- Please keep your mobile phone on silent/vibrate while on the school grounds
- Please do not use phones where pupils are present. If you must use your phone, you may go to [insert location]
- Do not take photos or recordings of pupils (unless it is your own child), or staff
- Do not use your phone in lessons, when working with pupils or while children are present

The school accepts no responsibility for phones that are lost, damaged or stolen while you are on the school grounds.

A full copy of our mobile phone policy is available from the school office.

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