

Mobile phone policy

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1. Introduction and aims

At Empower Trust we recognise that mobile phones and similar devices, including smartphones, are an important part of everyday life for our pupils, parents/carers and staff, as well as the wider school community.

Our aims to:

- Promote safe and responsible phone use
- Set clear guidelines for the use of mobile phones for pupils, staff, parents/carers, visitors and volunteers
- Support the school's other policies, especially those related to child protection and behaviour

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

- Risks to child protection
- Data protection issues
- Potential for lesson disruption
- Risk of theft, loss, or damage
- Appropriate use of technology in the classroom

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

2. Relevant guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the Department for Education's non-statutory [mobile phone guidance](#) and [behaviour guidance](#). Further guidance that should be considered alongside this policy is [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#).

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 Staff

All staff (including teachers, support staff and supply staff) are responsible for consistently enforcing this policy. 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.

The headteacher in each academy school is responsible for monitoring the policy and its implementation and holding staff and pupils accountable for its implementation.

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

This policy will be reviewed every 2 years or when guidance and advice changes.

4. Use of mobile phones by staff

4.1 Personal mobile phones

Staff (including volunteers, contractors and anyone else otherwise engaged by the school) are not permitted to use their personal mobile phone, while children are present or during contact time. Use of personal mobile phones must be restricted to non-contact time and **exceptional needs of specific central staff roles**, and to areas of the school where pupils are not present (such as the staffroom).

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):

- For emergency contact by their child, or their child's school
- In the case of acutely ill dependents or family members
- Central team staff who are required to be contactable and need to take specific photos of machinery/school site areas. **Under no circumstances should children be photographed.**

The headteacher will decide on a case-by-basis whether to allow for special arrangements within their own staff team. Central staff that have permission to remain with their mobile have signed a specific declaration of use agreed by the trust. (See appendix)

4.2 Data protection

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).

This policy must also comply with the GDPR and Data Protection Policy and ICT and Cyber Security Policy.

4.3 Safeguarding

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

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

Staff must not use their personal mobile phones to take photographs or recordings of pupils, their work, or anything else which 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.

Staff may need to use their mobile phones for some logins to online systems, for example, CPOMS. Where there are additional at school level, these should be documented by the school.

4.4 Using personal mobiles for work purposes

In some circumstances, it may be appropriate for staff to use personal mobile phones for work. Such circumstances may include, but aren't limited to:

- To issue homework, rewards or sanctions
- To use multi-factor authentication
- Emergency evacuations
- Supervising off-site trips
- Supervising residential visits

In these circumstances, staff will:

- Use their mobile phones in an appropriate and professional manner, in line with our staff code of conduct
- Not use their phones to take photographs or recordings of pupils, their work, or anything else which could identify a pupil
- Refrain from using their phones to contact parents/carers. If necessary, every effort should be made to contact via the school office. If a call is made to a parent/carer from a personal phone, this should be logged on the Management Information System (Arbor).

4.5 Work phones

Some members of staff from the central team or within school require access to a mobile phone for work purposes.

Only authorised staff **are permitted to use phones, and access to the phone must not be provided to anyone without authorisation. A signed declaration must be agreed by the trust for each person who has been permitted to use phones on site.**

Staff must:

- Only use phone functions for work purposes, including making/receiving calls, sending/receiving emails or other communications, or using the internet
- Ensure that communication or conduct linked to the device is appropriate and professional at all times, in line with our staff code of conduct.

4.6 EYFS

In early years, to safeguard children and practitioners online, providers will find it helpful to refer to 'Safeguarding children and protecting professionals in early years settings: online safety considerations at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-children-and-protecting-professionals-in-early-years-settings-online-safety-considerations>

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 non-statutory mobile phone guidance says that pupils should not use mobile phones throughout the school day. Pupils should not use phones/smart watches/other devices with image capturing ability within the school grounds and should not bring a mobile phone to school.

For the children in Y5/6, where parents think there are exceptional circumstances that their child requires a mobile phone in school, this should be made by completing a form from the office. The handset would need to be turned off and placed into a clear, named plastic bag before handing in to the class teacher/school office/agreed place by the school.

Exceptional circumstances that may justify a pupil being allowed to bring a mobile phone to school typically include situations where the child's safety or wellbeing could be compromised without access to a device. For example:

- Pupils who travel to and from school independently—particularly if their journey involves public transport or walking a considerable distance—may require a phone to keep in contact with parents or guardians.
- Specific medical needs where a pupil must be reachable at all times.
- Family emergencies that necessitate immediate communication.

Each request is considered on an individual basis and is at the discretion of the headteacher, ensuring that the school can balance safeguarding concerns with the genuine needs of pupils and their families.

This will then be kept in a basket on a shelf in the appropriate room. This is on the understanding that parents accept the risk involved, as we are unable to offer secure storage.

It would be the child's responsibility to remember to collect this at the end of the day before leaving school. Any phone that is brought into school, must not have a camera and should not have internet access. This is to safeguard all children within school. Children are reminded that they should not take images of other children within the school setting. Staff discuss with children how important it is not to post images of other children without their consent. If pupils breach these procedures, the school has the right to ban them from bringing phones into schools altogether.

5.1 Use of smartwatches

The DfE's [non-statutory mobile phone guidance](#) includes in the term 'mobile phones' all devices with communications and smart technology that the school chooses to include in their policy.

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. For safeguarding purposes, pupils are not allowed smart watches in school.

Where staff are wearing smart watches, notifications should be turned off and camera disabled.

5.2 Exceptions for special circumstances

Some pupils are allowed to bring a mobile phone to school or use it in school. For instance:

- Pupils travelling to school by themselves
- Young carers who need to be contactable
- Pupils with diabetes who use their phones to monitor their blood sugar

The school may permit pupils to use a mobile phone in school, due to exceptional circumstances. This will be considered on a case-by-case basis. To request such permission, pupils or parents/carers should contact the headteacher.

Any pupils who are given permission must then adhere to the school's acceptable use agreement for mobile phone use (see appendix 1).

5.3 Sanctions

If pupils breach this policy, the following sanctions can be applied:

- The mobile phone/smart watch/other devices can be confiscated (Schools are permitted to confiscate phones from pupils under [sections 91](#) and [94](#) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006)

➤ If they are confiscated, these will need to be collected by the parent at the end of the school day (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](#))

➤ Consequences linked to the Positive Behaviour Policy

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).

Any search taken of a phone will be conducted by a senior leader or Designated Safeguarding Lead. If inappropriate content is found, the school will follow guidance in the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

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, 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 Part 1 of [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)

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:

- Sexting (consensual and non-consensual sharing nude or semi-nude images or videos)
- Upskirting
- Threats of violence or assault
- 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

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:

- Handing the phone in at reception if required by the academy school
- Not taking pictures or recordings of pupils, unless it's at a public event (such as a school fair), or of their own child
- Using any photographs or recordings for personal use only, and not posting on social media without consent
- Not using phones in lessons, or when working with pupils

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.

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

- Use their phone to make contact with other parents/carers
- Take photos or recordings of pupils, their work, or anything else which could identify a pupil

Parents/carers or volunteers supervising trips are also responsible for enforcing the school's policy for pupils using their phones, as set out in section 5 above, but must refer any sanctions to a member of staff, as they do not have the power to search or confiscate devices.

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

Pupils bringing mobile phones to school must ensure that the phones are appropriately labelled and are stored securely when not in use.

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.

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 and from school.

People are made aware of the disclaimers above through:

- Signs up in the school entryway or office
- Disclaimers in your permission forms for bringing a phone to school
- Through this policy

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.

Lost phones should be returned to the school office. The school will then attempt to contact the owner.

8. Monitoring and review

The school is committed to ensuring that this policy has a positive impact of pupils' education, behaviour and welfare.

When reviewing the policy, the school will take into account:

- Feedback from parents/carers and pupils
- Feedback from staff
- Records of behaviour and safeguarding incidents
- Relevant advice from the Department for Education, the local authority and any other relevant organisations

9. Appendix 1: Code of Conduct for pupils allowed to bring their phones to school due to exceptional circumstances

Code of conduct/acceptable use agreement

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

1. You may not use your mobile phone during the school day.
2. Phones must be switched off (not just put on 'silent').
3. You cannot take photos or recordings (either video or audio) of school staff or other pupils without their consent; this included before or after the end of the school day.
4. Avoid sharing your contact details with people you don't know, and don't share other people's contact details without their consent.
5. Don't share your phone's password(s) or access code(s) with anyone else.
6. Don't use your mobile phone to bully, intimidate or harass anyone. This includes bullying, harassing or intimidating pupils or staff via:
 - a. Email
 - b. Text/messaging app
 - c. Social media
7. Don't use your phone to send or receive anything that may be criminal. For instance, by sending intimidating messages.
8. Rules on bullying, harassment and intimidation apply to how you use your mobile phone even when you aren't in school.
9. 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.
10. Don't use your phone to view or share pornography or other harmful content.
11. 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.
12. If you have a mobile phone, you will be asked to store it appropriately, during the school day.

10. Appendix 2: Permission form allowing a pupil to bring their phone to school

This form is for pupils who have been allowed to bring their phone into school under exceptional circumstances. It should be signed by parents/carers.

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:
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
- > 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: _____

FOR SCHOOL USE ONLY	
Authorised by:	
Date:	