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Mobile Phones and Smart Devices Policy

2026 - 2028

St. Matthias CE Primary School

This policy is reviewed and updated by Ginnie Beale and is approved by the Local Governing Body.

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

- Mobile Phones in Schools - DfE, February 2026
- Keeping Children Safe in Education - DfE, September 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

This policy works in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct Policy
- Safeguarding Policy

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1 Introduction

1.01 Government guidance

The Department for Education's publication, Mobile Phones in Schools (2026) is the definitive guidance for all schools in the UK on the issues around the use of mobile phones during the school day.

The document makes the following statements:

- All schools should be mobile phone-free environments by default; anything other than this should be by exception only.
- All schools must have a behaviour policy which is aligned with the school's legal duties and standards relating to the welfare of children. This is essential in establishing and maintaining high standards of behaviour ensuring that the school is a calm and safe environment for all pupils and staff.
- Schools should develop a mobile phone policy that prohibits the use of mobile phones and other smart technology with similar functionality to mobile phones (for example the ability to send and/or receive notifications or messages via mobile phone networks or the ability to record audio and/or video) throughout the school day, including during lessons, the time between lessons, breaktimes and lunchtime. A school may decide that its pupils may require access to their mobile phones before and after school, but they do not want pupils to have access to their mobile phones throughout the school day.

1.02 Aims of this policy

This policy sets St Matthias CE Primary School's aims on mobile phone use, considering the following four objectives:

- The use of mobile phones during the school day risks unnecessary distraction, disruption and diversion.
- We acknowledge that a number of parents wish for their children to have their mobile phones with them before and after school to ensure their safety during their journey home.
- To educate the children of St Matthias CE Primary School on the possible risks of mobile phone use and to ensure that the necessary support is given to parents to help protect their children when using mobile phones out of school hours.
- To ensure all necessary steps are taken to guarantee the safeguarding of all pupils from risk during the school day.

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 lessons
- covered within 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 the dangers of screen time and persuasive design, privacy settings, dangers around taking and sharing digital images and recordings and app specific content as and when a need occurs. 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 Procedures for mobile phones for children

3.01 Procedures

At St Matthias CE Primary 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 sets 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.
- The phone must be switched off when on the school grounds.
- Before the start of the school day, the phone should be stored safely away and out of sight until handed in.
- At the start of the school day, the phone must be handed in at the collection point.
- The phone should be 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.
- School is not responsible for loss, theft or damage to mobile phones that have been handed in.

3.02 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 Time Out A
- If a phone is visible during the school day, then it will result in a Time Out B
- If a phone is used on school site for any purpose without express permission from a staff member, then it will be confiscated and parents or carers will need to collect the phone from the school office. The law protects staff from liability in any proceedings brought against them for any loss or damage to items they have confiscated as a sanction.
- Parents will be notified of the above via Class Dojo and points will be deducted accordingly.

Furthermore:

- If a child breaches the above on more than two occasions, they will not be allowed to bring their phone on site.

More serious breaches:

- If a pupil is caught taking photographs/videos on their mobile in school, they will be asked to delete them immediately and the phone will be confiscated, as this is in breach of our safeguarding policy.
- Should a pupil upload material taken whilst in school to any form of social media the pupil will be given an appropriate consequence e.g. a Time Out C or a fixed-term suspension. 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.

3.03 Potential damage, loss or theft

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 sits with the parent or carer of the child's device in question. Any other child found stealing or intentionally causing damage to another child's property will face sanctions in line with our Behaviour Policy, including possible police involvement.

4 Use of mobile phones by 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 are members of the Senior Leadership Team, Safeguarding Team, Site Manager, where it is acknowledged that instant and reliable communication is vital to ensuring the safe and effective running of the school. Where appropriate these permitted members of staff will use their mobile devices away from children.

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

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

5 Use of mobile phones by volunteers and professional visitors

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

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.

These protocols are outlined in the Safeguarding Advice for Volunteers and Visitors flyer that is offered to all volunteers and visitors upon arrival at the school office.

Parents and carers will be permitted to use their mobile phones for photos and videos during worships, performances and sporting events provided the images are for personal use and are not shared on social media.

6 Use of mobile phones on school trips

6.01 Day trips
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.

6.02 Out of school hours trips
Occasionally a trip will involve a start, or finish outside of the normal school hours. On these occasions, 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. The same sanctions apply as the main policy for any child breaching the policy.

6.03 Residential trips
A residential trip is defined as any trip that involves an overnight stay. Children are not permitted to take their mobile phone on a residential visit and are advised to leave them at home. Phones brought into school should be handed in on arrival and collected on completion of the trip.

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.

6.04 Staff, volunteers and visitors use
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's, volunteer's or visitor's duty of care for the children and other adults' safety, wellbeing and educational benefit on the trip.

7 The role of parents
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 Searching pupils
Headteachers, or staff they authorise, have a statutory power to search a pupil or their possessions where they have reasonable grounds to suspect that the pupil is in possession of a prohibited item. The details of how and when such searches take place are follow the

Government guidance set out in the publication Searching, Screening and Confiscation in Schools - DfE, February 2023.

9 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 consider 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.

Allowing flexibility for individual pupils does not mean that they are necessarily exempt from all restrictions and sanctions outlined in this policy.