



Mobile Phone Policy

Debden C of E Primary Academy

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1. Introduction and aims

At Debden Primary Academy our policy aims to:

- Ensure our environment is mobile phone-free by default
- Ensure the safe, responsible and lawful use of mobile phones, where applicable
- Provide 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
- Risk of theft, loss or damage
- Appropriate use of technology for learning purposes

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

2. Relevant guidance

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

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.

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 is responsible for monitoring the policy and reviewing it every year, whilst 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.

3.2 Governors

This policy is approved and monitored by governors as part of the safeguarding review process.

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.

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 during the school day, while pupils are present. 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).

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
- Staff may use their personal mobile phones where necessary for work-related security purposes, such as accessing multi-factor authentication (MFA) or authentication apps required to log in to school systems.

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 01799 540302 as a point of emergency contact.

4.2 Data protection

For detailed guidance on data protection requirements, staff must refer to the school's Data Protection Policy and ICT Acceptable Use Policy.

Key requirements include:

- No personal information relating to school business, pupils or staff may be stored on personal equipment
- Any actual, suspected or potential data protection breach must be reported immediately to the school's Data Protection Officer
- Staff must ensure that no children's work, school sensitive data or personal information is uploaded to AI Tools

The school's data protection obligations are governed by the Data Protection Act 2018, the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR), and the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025

4.3 Safeguarding

- 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 that could identify a pupil. If it's necessary to take photos or recordings as part of a lesson, school trip or activity, this must be done using school equipment only (school cameras, iPads or computers). Photographs must be downloaded at school or onto school equipment.
- Staff must never share their personal phone number or contact details with pupils or parents/carers. Staff must not contact parents or pupils by text/mobile phone, messaging apps (such as WhatsApp or Facebook Messenger) or social media, and vice versa. All communication with parents/carers and pupils must be conducted through official school systems, such as the school office, school email addresses, or other approved school communication platforms.
- Staff must not accept or propose contact with current pupils through personal social networking sites or engage in conversations with them through such sites.
- Further guidance on safeguarding requirements can be found in the Staff Code of Conduct, ICT Acceptable Use Policy and Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

4.4 Using personal mobiles for work purposes

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:

- Use of 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 that could identify a pupil
- Refrain from using their phones to contact parents/carers. If necessary, contact must be made via the school office

4.5 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

In line with statutory guidance, our school operates as a mobile phone-free environment. Pupils are only allowed to bring a mobile phone to school if they are walking to and from school unaccompanied, travelling between their parents' homes, or where there is a specific medical need that requires access to a mobile device to monitor or manage a health condition. Any such arrangements must be agreed in advance with the school and supported by appropriate medical evidence where necessary.

If a pupil brings a mobile phone or smart watch with phone/camera capabilities to school, it must be handed in to the school office at the start of the school day, where it will be stored securely and locked away. The

device will be returned to the pupil at the end of the school day. The school accepts no liability for any loss or damage to devices brought onto the school premises. Failure to comply with this policy may result in the device being confiscated and parents/carers being required to collect it from the school office.

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

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.

Our approach to smartwatches

Smartwatches with phone or camera capabilities are subject to the same restrictions as mobile phones. Pupils are only allowed to bring a smartwatch with phone or camera capabilities to school if they are walking to and from school unaccompanied, or if they are travelling between parents' homes.

If a pupil brings a smartwatch with phone or camera capabilities to school, it must be handed to the school office at the start of the school day, where it will be stored securely and locked away. The device will be returned to the pupil at the end of the school day.

Basic smartwatches that only tell the time and do not have communication, camera, internet access or recording capabilities may be worn during the school day.

Enforcement

Staff will monitor pupils for smartwatch use during the school day. Due to the smaller size of smartwatches and their similarity in appearance to regular watches, staff should be vigilant and challenge any watch that appears to have smart technology features.

If a pupil is found to be wearing or using a smartwatch with phone or camera capabilities during the school day without permission, the device will be confiscated immediately, and parents/carers will be required to collect it from the school office.

Parental communication

Parents/carers who wish their child to bring a mobile phone or smartwatch with phone or camera capabilities to school must inform the school office in advance and confirm the reason (walking to/from school unaccompanied or travelling between parents' homes). This helps us ensure we can identify which pupils have permission and supports our safeguarding procedures.

If parents/carers need to contact their child during the school day in an emergency, they should call the school office on 01799 540302.

5.2 Sanctions

Confiscation

If a pupil is found to be in breach of this policy, their mobile phone or smartwatch will be confiscated immediately by a member of staff. The school has the legal power to confiscate phones from pupils under sections 91 and 94 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

The device will be confiscated if:

- A pupil is found using or wearing a mobile phone or smartwatch with phone/camera capabilities during the school day (including lessons, breaktimes and lunchtimes)

- A pupil fails to hand in their mobile phone or smartwatch at the start of the school day as required
- A pupil is found to have a mobile phone or smartwatch in their possession during the school day without prior permission from the school
- A pupil refuses to hand over their device when requested by a member of staff

Searching pupils' phones

In specific circumstances, staff have the legal power to search pupils' phones, as set out in the DfE's guidance on searching, screening and confiscation.

A search may be conducted if there is reasonable suspicion that a pupil's phone contains:

- Pornographic images or other illegal content
- Evidence that the phone is being used, or has been used, to commit an offence
- Evidence that the phone is being used, or has been used, to cause harm to another person (including cyberbullying, harassment, or sharing of inappropriate images)
- Content that poses a safeguarding risk to the pupil or others

Search procedures:

- Searches will be conducted by the Headteacher or a member of staff authorised by the Headteacher
- Where possible, searches will be conducted by a staff member of the same sex as the pupil, with another staff member present as a witness
- The pupil will be asked to unlock the device and show the content in question
- If the pupil refuses to cooperate, parents/carers will be contacted immediately and the matter may be escalated to external agencies if appropriate
- All searches will be recorded, including the reason for the search, who was present, and the outcome

Sanctions

If inappropriate or illegal content is found:

For safeguarding concerns (e.g., indecent images of children, evidence of abuse):

- The school's safeguarding procedures will be followed, which may include contacting parents/carers, the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), and/or the police
- The device may be retained as evidence and handed to the police if required
- The pupil will receive appropriate support in line with our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

For cyberbullying or harmful behaviour towards others:

- Parents/carers of all pupils involved will be contacted
- The incident will be addressed in line with our Behaviour Policy and Anti-Bullying Policy
- Appropriate sanctions will be applied, which may include internal exclusion, fixed-term suspension, or permanent exclusion depending on the severity
- Support will be provided to any pupils who have been harmed

For other inappropriate content (e.g., age-inappropriate material, offensive content):

- Parents/carers will be contacted and required to attend a meeting
- The content will be discussed with the pupil and parents/carers
- Appropriate education and support will be provided regarding online safety
- Sanctions will be applied in line with our Behaviour Policy

The severity of the sanction will be proportionate to the breach and will take into account:

- The nature of the breach
- Whether it is a first or repeated offence
- The age and understanding of the pupil
- Any special educational needs or disabilities
- Whether the breach involved harm to others or posed a safeguarding risk

6. Use of mobile phones by parents/carers, volunteers and visitors

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.

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:

- Using any photographs or recordings for personal use only, and not posting on social media without consent
- Not using phones in lessons, when working with pupils or while children are present

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 that could identify a pupil

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.

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 make sure that their phones are appropriately labelled, ready to be stored away securely when not in use during the school day.

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 or from school.

8. Monitoring and review

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 consider:

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

9. Appendix 1: Pupil acceptable use agreement] for pupils allowed to bring their phones to school due to exceptional circumstances

Pupil acceptable use agreement

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

1. Mobile phones brought to school are the responsibility of the pupil. The school cannot accept responsibility for loss, theft or damage to any personal mobile device.
2. Your phone must be handed in to the office as soon as you arrive in school unless you have permission to have it in class. It must be turned off (not on silent).
3. If you are allowed it on you, 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. 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 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
7. Don't use your phone to view or share harmful content.
8. 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.
9. Smartwatches and other devices with communication, photography or recording functions must follow the same rules as mobile phones.
10. If a pupil has permission to use a mobile phone to support a medical condition, it may only be used for the agreed medical purpose and in accordance with their Individual Healthcare Plan or agreed arrangements.
11. Pupils must not use mobile internet, messaging apps, social media or online games during the school day unless specifically authorised by a member of staff for educational or medical purposes.
12. Pupils must not use mobile phones during fire evacuations, lockdown procedures or other emergency situations unless instructed to do so by a member of staff.

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

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

The school has agreed to allow _____ to bring their mobile phone to school because they:

- Travel to and from school alone
- Are a young carer
- Need the phone to support their medical needs

Other: _____

Pupils who bring a mobile phone to school must abide by the school's policy on the use of mobile phones, and its Acceptable user agreement.

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

Parent/carer signature: _____

Pupil signature: _____

FOR SCHOOL USE ONLY	
Authorised by:	
Date:	

11. Appendix 3: Template mobile phone information for visitors

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 will need to go to the reception area.
- 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.