

THRIFTWOOD



Mobile Phone Policy

**Including Smart Watches and
other similar devices**

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in response to DfE statutory guidance Mobile Phones in Schools 29 June 2026

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1. Introduction and aims

At Thriftwood we recognise that mobile phones, ipads, tablets, smart watches and similar devices are an important part of everyday life for our learners, parents/carers and staff, as well as the wider school community.

Our policy aims to:

- Promote safe and responsible device use
- Set clear guidelines for the use of mobile phones, and similar devices for learners, staff, parents/carers, visitors and volunteers
- Support Thriftwood and the SEAX Trust'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, and similar personal devices 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 statutory guidance [Mobile phones in schools - GOV.UK](#) 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 Executive Headteacher is responsible for monitoring the policy every 3 years, reviewing it, and holding staff and learners 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.

4. Use of mobile phones by staff

The DfE's statutory guidance says that staff **should not** use their own mobile phone for personal reasons in front of learners throughout the school day.

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 during contact time, unless to contact school / college if on an off-site visit, or to operate a system required for learner. An example of this will be the music system or Blaze Pods. Use of personal mobile phones must be restricted to non-contact time, and to areas of the school where learners 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

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 as a point of emergency contact.

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 Bard).

Please refer to our ICT Acceptable Use Policy

4.3 Safeguarding

Staff must not give their personal contact details to parents/carers or learners, 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 learners.

Please refer to our Staff Code of Conduct.

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

If using a classroom app or programmes that require the use of a member of staff's mobile phone, they should ensure that the phone is not accessed by learners, and it should be put out of sight when not being used.

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 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 learners, their work, or anything else that could identify a learner
- Refrain from using their phones to contact parents/carers unless in an emergency. If necessary, contact will be made via the school office

5. Use of mobile phones by learners

The DfE's statutory mobile phone guidance says schools should be mobile phone-free environments by default; anything other than this should be by exception only.

Learners should not use their mobile phones during the school day, including during lessons, in the time between lessons, at breaktimes and at lunchtimes. This policy also applies to off-site visits and residential trips.

For the school site, key stage 2 and key stage 3, if learners choose to bring their phone to school, they must hand the device to the class teacher upon arrival at site every day. The phone will be returned to the learner at the end of every day. These devices will be kept in an identified area / container in each classroom. Parents should ensure their child's mobile phone is appropriately labelled / recognisable. This also applies to smart watches.

For college based learners, Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5, we have a 'Never used, seen or heard' policy whereby the learners are able to keep possession of their mobile phone only on the strict condition that they are never used, seen or heard.

The exception to this rule is for Key Stage 5 learners when they are out on community learning or in specific life skills lessons as directed by their tutor. During these times Key Stage 5 learners' mobile phones may be used to communicate with the group and their tutor, learn specific functions of the phone that can aid in independence and safety, and complete tasks that may be set by the tutor.

5.1 Use of smartwatches by learners

The DfE's [statutory](#) 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. Some smart watches have wellness and health-related features.

The above rules for mobile phones / ipads / tablets etc also apply for smart watches, so KS2/3 learners must hand their smart watch in, and for KS4/5 learners the smart watch should not be worn to college.

5.2 Sanctions

For Key Stage 2 and 3 on the school site, if a learner fails to hand in their mobile phone / device to school upon arrival, their device will be confiscated, and their parent will be contacted with a request made for the device not to be sent into school.

For Key Stage 4 and 5, any breach of this policy will result in confiscation of the device and continued flaunting of the rule will result in suspension.

Headteachers, or staff they authorise, have a statutory power to search a learner or their possessions where they have reasonable grounds to suspect that the learner is in possession of a prohibited item as per their behaviour policy.

In each case, the sanction given will be reasonable and proportionate, taking into account:

- any relevant special circumstances (for example, age, religious requirements, special educational needs, disability)
- The learner'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](#)

5.3 Exceptions to the rule

Schools have a duty under the [Equality Act 2010](#) to take such steps as is reasonable to avoid substantial disadvantage to a disabled learner caused by the school's policies or practices. Allowing a disabled learner 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 and a failure to do so may be a breach of the school's duty. For example, learner with diabetes might use continuous glucose monitoring with a sensor linked to their mobile phone to monitor blood sugar levels. This will be judged on an individual basis, and the mobile phone only used to support the disability, and for no other reason.

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:

- Not taking pictures or recordings of learners, 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, in the corridor, or when working with learners

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 learners, their work, or anything else that could identify a learner

Parents/carers or volunteers supervising trips are also responsible for enforcing the school's policy for learners 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

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 learners are travelling to and from school.

8. Monitoring and review

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

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