Mayflower Federation: Mobile phone policy

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1. Introduction and aims

At Mayflower Federation, 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 Senior Leadership Team is responsible for monitoring the policy and reviewing it every year, 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.

3.2 Governors

Governors will be kept up-to-date with the contents of the policy, the implementation of the policy and have oversight to any changes made in annual updates.

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 / 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).

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 executive headteacher/ head of school 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 Gemini).

Further information on data protection can be found in the data protection and GDPR policies. Data protection factors in relation to the use of mobile phones should also be read in conjunction with the ICT acceptable use policy.

4.3 Safeguarding

Staff must not give their personal contact details to parents/carers or pupils, including by 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 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.

4.4 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 Work phones

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

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

Staff must:

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

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 the senior leadership team (for example, for a specific medical reason).

The school hold the position that mobile phones should not be brought into school by pupils. In the rare occasion that a pupil is required by their parent then it should be handed over to the class teacher switched off, where the mobile phone will then be stored for the duration of the whole day. The phone will be handed back to the pupil at the end of the day. Any deviation from this protocol, for example for a medical reason or emergency, should be made with the Executive Headteacher or Head of School. Mobile phones or any other electronic device will not be permitted on any residential visit unless significant mitigating circumstances are approved in advance by a senior member of staff.

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

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.

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.

The school does not permit the wearing of smartwatches in school.

5.2 Sanctions

If a pupil is found to not comply with the requirements of this policy then the behaviour code will be followed and applied. The mobile phone will be immediately confiscated and only returned to a parent/ carer at the next possible opportunity.

Schools are permitted to confiscate phones from pupils under sections 91 and 94 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006)

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 school staff to search for 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. Staff members should seek the phone and pass onto the police/ authorities to seek futher action. Under no circumstances is staff member allowed to look on child's phone.

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

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:

- 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')
- 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 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:

- Not taking pictures or recordings of pupils, unless it's at a public event (such as a school fair), or only 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, when working with pupils or while children are present

Parents/carers, visitors and volunteers will be informed of the rules for mobile phone use when they sign in at reception or attend an 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 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 by the class teacher 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.

Confiscated phones will be stored in the school safe.

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

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 take into account:

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

Appendix 1: Template mobile phone information slip 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 may go to the staffroom
- Do not take photos or recordings of pupils 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.