



**St Edward's
School**

Unity - Achievement - Faith

Mobile phone and electronic communications policy

Reviewed and Approved by the Business and Premises Committee

On: 11th June 2024

Reviewed and Ratified by Full Governing Body

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SLT and Directors of Learning are responsible for the implementation and oversight of this Policy

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1. Introduction and aims

Our approach to mobile phones is already clear and long-standing. At St Edward's School we recognise that mobile devices, including mobile phones and SMART watches, are part of everyday life for our students, parents, carers and staff, as well as the wider school community: 97% of students own a mobile phone and by the age of 17, 100% of adolescents have a mobile phone. But we also recognise that overuse of mobile phones is linked to cognitive-emotional regulation, impulsivity, impaired cognitive function, excessive introversion and low self-esteem (Wacks and Weinstein, 2021). 1 in 5 young people have experienced bullying online while physiological issues related to excessive phone use include sleep deprivation, reduced fitness, unhealthy eating, migraines and reduced cognitive control (SecEd).

This policy sets out to provide guidance and support for healthy and appropriate mobile phone use whilst safeguarding the mental health and wellbeing of students. It aims to set clear guidelines for the use of mobile phones and other electronic devices for students, staff, parents, carers, and volunteers. This policy supports 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 devices in school, such as:

- Risks to child protection including online safety and inappropriate use of images.
- Challenges to physiological and mental health
- Potential for lesson disruption
- Circumventing of school authority and processes
- Data protection issues
- Risk of theft, loss, or damage
- Appropriate use of technology in the classroom

2. Roles and responsibilities

2.1 Staff

Staff should provide a psychologically safe environment which provides a break from phone usage and protects from:

- Social media/ cyber bullying
- Peer pressure
- Stigma associated with owning/ not owning an expensive device.
- Worry and anxiety caused by maintaining friendships – encouraging the development of habits to foster face to face interactions, increasing positive mental health and wellbeing.
- From unnecessary distraction, disruption and diversion from learning and socialising safely.

There are frequent opportunities through our school curriculum (computing and PSHE for example), assemblies and the tutor programme, the school's website, and social media and through conversations with students and parents and carers, to encourage safe online behaviour and remind students and parents and carers of the potential dangers associated with children or young person's use of social media.

All staff (including teachers, support staff, and supply staff) are responsible for 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 school will manage any inappropriate usage of mobile phones/devices that take place in school and during school hours. Outside of this, we rely on parents to monitor and influence their child's online behaviour.

The Headteacher is responsible for monitoring the policy via Directors of Learning every 2 years, reviewing it, and holding staff and students accountable for its implementation.

3. Students:

- St. Edward's School does not permit the use of mobile phones by students for any purpose on its site.
- Phones are also not permitted on school trips, unless authorised by the trip leader who will inform parents and carers if mobile phones are permitted.
- St. Edward's School understands that some parents and carers wish their child to carry a mobile phone for use outside of the school's premises. In such circumstances, students must ensure their mobile phones are switched off during school hours, and kept securely in their bag, locker, or blazer. St. Edward's School will not accept responsibility for damaged, lost, or stolen phones, and will not invest significant time in managing such instances.
- Students are responsible for their behaviour online, this includes:
 - Profile privacy
 - Age-appropriate usage (reminder WhatsApp is for students who are 13+)
 - Respecting other people's rights and feelings online
 - Considering the long-term consequences of online actions
 - Understanding and abiding by terms and conditions of use of the site

4. Parents and Carers:

Will support their child(ren) by:

- Ensuring that if you wish to contact their child during the day, or vice versa, all calls must be via the school office/ a key adult.
- Work with the school to protect our students from potential distractions to learning and from antisocial behaviour that can easily be created and fueled by social media.
- Encourage device-free time, especially before bedtime, to avoid the impact of blue screen (see signposting section)
- Model device-free time and advocate the benefits of stepping away from devices.
- If your child has a mobile phone, laptop, or easy access to the internet (games consoles such as PlayStation or XBOX), we are actively encouraging parents and carers to check their child's usage on social media and text communications between them, their peers and anyone else.

- To do this have you should have full access to your child's device.
- If your child is worried about being added to any groups, please encourage them to remove themselves and support them to block numbers or people that persist in adding them back into groups.
- As the bill-payer, parents and carers hold the power over your child's access to their device/s.

5. Use of SMART watches by students

SMART watches are high value items, and the school does not recommend that they are brought into school. Such watches, insofar as they are capable of recording, communicating, and capturing images; represent a the same risk to safeguarding, the orderly running of the school, and disruption to learning as mobile phones; and so are covered under this policy.

They will be treated in the same way as mobile phones if they are used, or seen, in school.

5.1 Sanctions

In accordance with the school's behaviour policy ("Promoting Positive Behaviour") St. Edward's School expects full cooperation with this policy from students, parents and carers, staff, and visitors.

Schools are permitted to confiscate any items prohibited from use in school, including phones and SMART watches, from students under sections 91 and 94 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

If a phone is seen in use, or if there is evidence that a phone has been used in school, it will be confiscated and kept in the School Office until the end of the school day and will require a parent or carer to collect the phone from the school. Refusal to hand over an item for confiscation to a member of staff will be treated as defiance, and thus a serious breach of the school's behaviour code.

If a student uses a mobile phone to contact parents or carers to communicate their version of events ~~in~~ first; or if such a call requires staff time for subsequent management; then a range of sanctions may be used from a restorative catch up a suspension depending on the circumstances.

Staff at St. Edward's school have the authority to search a student's mobile phone without consent if they have reason to believe that the phone contains pornographic images, and/or if it is being, or has been used to commit an offence or cause personal injury, including safeguarding concerns. (DfE guidance on searching, screening, and confiscation).

If inappropriate material is found on a phone, or if there is evidence that it has been misused as above, the DSL must be informed at the earliest opportunity; and, if appropriate, the relevant Director of Learning.

School sanctions may be imposed for misuse of social media outside of school but again, we rely on parents to monitor and influence their child's online behaviour at home where the school can affect little impact.

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. If the police are required to search a phone, for example if the student refuses to cooperate with staff, or if a crime is suspected; the police will confiscate the phone and it is likely that it will not be returned.

If criminal or illegal activity is suspected, the school reserves the right to retain any confiscated items until they are reviewed by the police.

Such conduct includes, but is not limited to:

- Youth produced sexual imagery

- Threats of violence or assault

- Abusive calls, emails, social media posts or texts directed at someone based on someone's additional or specific needs, ethnicity, religious beliefs or sexual orientation.

- Access to information regarding extremism: this may require a referral to Prevent.

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

Parents and 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 students ~~unless it is a public event (such as a school fair), or of their own child during any school event, unless permission is granted by a member of the senior leadership team~~

- Using any photographs or recordings for personal use only. ~~and~~

- Not posting ~~on any~~ photographs or recordings on social media without consent

- Not using phones in lessons, or when working with students

Parents and 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, but this policy stands irrespective of whether this has happened or not.

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

- Use their phone to contact other parents.

- Take photos or recordings of students, their work, or anything else which could identify a student.

Parents and carers or volunteers supervising trips are also responsible for enforcing the school's policy for students using their phones, as set out in section 3 above.

Parents 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 his/her personal mobile during the school day.

7. Loss, theft, or damage

Students must secure their electronic device as much as possible, including using passwords or pin codes to protect access to the phone's functions.

The school accepts no responsibility for mobile phones or any electronic equipment that are lost, damaged or stolen on school premises or transport, during school visits or trips, or while students are travelling to and from school. The school will not invest significant time in managing the loss, theft, or damage of any item that it recommends is not brought to school.

All parents and carers are given a copy of this policy via the form tutor, and their attention is drawn to it via school communication.

Confiscated items will be stored in the school office until parental collection.

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

8. Trips

Students, parents, carers, visitors and volunteers must adhere to this policy during any school visit, trip or residential.

Students, parents carers and volunteers will be informed of the rules for mobile phones and other devices before any visit, trip or residential but this policy stands irrespective of whether this has happened or not.

9. Monitoring and review

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

Feedback from parents and carers and students

Feedback from teachers and other staff

Records of behaviour and safeguarding incidents

Relevant advice from the Department for Education, the Local Authority, or other relevant organisations.

The latest non-statutory guidance for schools can be found here https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65cf5f2a4239310011b7b916/Mobile_phones_in_schools_guidance.pdf

Signposting:

- [Think U Know: Information for children and young people](#)
- [Digizen: Information for educators, parents, carers, and young people on digital citizenship](#)
- <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/>
- <https://saferinternet.org.uk/guide-and-resource/parents-and-carers>
- <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/children-and-sleep/how-blue-light-affects-kids-sleep>

9. Appendix 1: Code of conduct/acceptable use agreement for students

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

1. You may not use your phone until you have left the school site. At the end of the day, as you are approaching traffic, you must not use your phone until you are beyond the entrance to the school.
2. Phones must be **switched off** (not just put on 'silent').
3. You may not use your mobile phone or SMART watch in the toilets or changing rooms. This is to protect the privacy and welfare of other students, or at any time whilst on site.
4. You cannot take photos or recordings (either video or audio) of school staff or other students without their consent. In doing so without consent you are committing a criminal act.
5. Do not share your contact details with people you don't know, and do not share other people's contact details without their consent.
6. Do not share the passwords or access codes of your devices with anyone else.
7. Do not use your mobile phone or SMART watch to bully, intimidate or harass anyone. This includes bullying, harassing or intimidating students or staff via:
 - a. Email
 - b. Text/messaging app
 - c. Social media

You will be sanctioned for such behaviour if it affects another student, even outside of the school day. Your behaviour may be considered a criminal action, and other families may ask for further action to be taken.

8. Don't use your phone or watch to send or receive anything that may be criminal. For instance, by making youth produced sexual imagery or 'sexting'. If you receive an illegal or obscene image you must not forward it. By doing so you are committing a criminal action. Consult a member of staff immediately. You are likely to be instructed to delete the image, and the police may be informed.
9. Rules on bullying, harassment, and intimidation apply to how you use your mobile phone or SMART watch even when you are not in school.
10. Do not use vulgar, obscene, discriminatory, or derogatory language while on the phone or when using social media. This language is not permitted under the school's behaviour policy.
11. You must comply with a request by a member of staff to switch off, or hand in, a phone or SMART watch. Refusal to comply is a breach of the school's behaviour policy and will be dealt with accordingly. Staff may request the police to search your phone if they believe a crime has been committed or if they feel that the phone contains information of a safeguarding or criminal nature.
12. Mobile phones and SMART watches are not permitted in **any** internal or external exam or test environment. If you have a mobile phone, you will be asked to store these appropriately, or turn them over to an exam invigilator, before entering the test room. Bringing a phone or SMART watch into the test room can result in your exam being declared invalid and you put this school as an examination centre at risk for everybody else.