St Edward's School

Unity - Achievement - Faith

Mobile phone and electronic communications policy

Reviewed and Approved by the Business and Premises Committee

On: July 2026

Reviewed and Ratified by Full Governing Body

On: July 2026

Next review date: Summer 2027

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

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1. Introduction and aims

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 has been developed in line with KCSIE 2025, Dfe update guidance around mobile phone use (2026) and the Education Act of 2006, which provide guidance for items where school rules have been breached.

We 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 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. Mobile Phone Policy

Year 7 – September 2026

Bringing a Mobile Phone to School

Parents and carers may choose to allow their child to bring a mobile phone to school, subject to the conditions outlined below:

- Only basic mobile phones may be brought onto the school site. Smartphones are not permitted under any circumstances including school trips.
- Any permitted handset must be a basic mobile phone only and must not have the ability to access the internet, connect to social media, download applications, take photographs, record video, or support games beyond basic built-in functions.
- All devices must be clearly marked with the student's full name.

- Phones must be switched off (not just on silent) before arrival on the school site and kept securely in the student's bag.

- Devices must remain in the bag throughout the school day and must not be accessed until the student has left the school site at the end of the day.

GPS Tracking Devices

Parents and carers who wish to monitor their child's journey to and from school may provide a small GPS tracking device (for example, an AirTag). These devices are allowed provided they are always kept in the student's bag and are not handled or used during the school day.

Year 8-11 September 2026 (Transitional Arrangements)

Whilst the school strongly encourages students not to bring smartphones to school, students currently in Years 8–11 will be permitted to bring their existing handset to school during this transitional period, subject to the updated conditions below.

- All devices must be clearly marked with the student's full name.

- Phones must be switched off (not just on silent) before arrival on the school site and kept securely in the student's bag and must not be accessed until the student has left the school site at the end of the day.

- Any smartphone that is seen (including in students' pockets), heard, or used on the school site during the school day will be treated as a breach of the mobile phone policy and will be subject to the sanctions outlined in the Confiscation and Consequences section.

3. Year 12 and 13 September 2026

Sixth Form students are permitted to bring mobile phones to school. However, their use is subject to the following expectations in order to maintain a focused and respectful learning environment:

- Mobile phones may be used in the Sixth Form Common Room and the corridor immediately outside this area.
- Mobile phone use is not permitted elsewhere on the school site.
- Phones must not be visible or used during lessons unless given permission to by a teacher.
- Phones must not be used in the study room, except to select music at the very start of a study period, before the register is taken.
- Any unauthorised use of a mobile phone will be recorded by staff on Class Charts.
- Any smartphone that is seen, heard, or used on the school site outside of the Sixth Form Centre will be treated as a breach of the mobile phone policy and the phone will be confiscated immediately and retained until the end of the school day.

4. Use of SMART watches by students

SMART watches are high value items, and are not permitted on school site. Such watches, insofar as they are capable of recording, communicating, and capturing images; represent 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 in school.

5. Misuse, Confiscation and Consequences (Years 7-11)

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 student is found to be in breach of the mobile phone policy on the school site, the following sanctions will apply:

First breach:

- The phone will be confiscated immediately and retained until the end of the school day.
- The student will be issued with an extended restorative.
- A letter will be sent home to parents/carers to formally notify them of the policy breach and to inform them of the consequences of a second breach.

Second breach and subsequent breaches:

- The phone will be confiscated and must be collected in person by a parent/carer with parental responsibility from a senior member of staff.
- Parents/carers will be contacted by email to arrange a suitable collection time. Devices will be returned subject to staff availability.
- The student will receive an extended restorative.

In all cases:

If a student refuses to hand over a device when requested, the matter will be dealt with as a serious breach of the behaviour policy and an escalated sanction will be issued.

6. Exceptions

Students who require a smart device for medical or health-related monitoring (for example, to support the management of a long-term condition such as diabetes) may be considered for an exemption and written into the Individual Health Plan.

Parents or carers should contact the school using the designated SEND or inclusion contact process to request this consideration. A meeting will be arranged with an appropriate member of staff to formally agree and document any approved adjustments.

7. Searching and confiscation

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.

8. 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.

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

This means:

- Not taking pictures or recordings of students 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
- Not posting 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 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.

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.

9. 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.

10. 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.

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

11. Trips

Students, parents carers and volunteers will be informed of the rules for mobile phones and other devices before any visit, trip or residential.

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