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SIR EDMUND HILLARY ACADEMY

Mobile Phone Policy

Procedure Management Log

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Guidance Used

1. University of Birmingham / *Lancet Regional Health Europe* study on smartphone policies and outcomes
2. BBC / Independent reporting on the same study
3. Beland & Murphy (2016), *Ill Communication: Technology, distraction & student performance*
4. (TES case study on pouch implementation and school improvement data)
5. UK Government case studies on mobile phone-free schools
6. King's College London "Pouch Study" research programme
7. School case reporting (e.g. Hitchin Boys' School, US district examples)

Introduction and Rationale

In 2026, the Department for Education (DfE) published updated guidance setting a clear expectation that schools should operate as mobile phone-free environments by default. This represents a notable shift from managing mobile phone use to removing access throughout the school day, including during lessons, transitions, and social times. The guidance also applies to other smart devices with similar functionality. While non-statutory, it carries significant weight and is likely to inform how schools are understood through inspection and wider accountability.

At Sir Edmund Hillary, our agreed approach is that mobile phones are handed to class teacher on arrival in school and then stored in the school office**,** thus allowing mobile phones that are brought into school remain inaccessible throughout the day. This model aligns closely with the DfE's expectation of eliminating access, while providing a practical and consistent method that can be implemented across UKS2.

This policy is designed to provide guidance to all stakeholders ensuring a clear, consistent, and sustainable approach across the Academy.

The benefits of a 'phone free' school are significant. These include:

Safety and safeguarding reasons

- Phones are addictive in nature and can be misused to record and immediately upload images / video / audio of staff or students without consent.
- Restricting use reduces risks linked to privacy and inappropriate content.
- Phones can be used for cyberbullying, taking photos or videos without consent, or spreading rumors.
- Protect students from online harassment during the school day.

Happiness and Wellbeing of Students

- Schools aim to teach balanced digital and communication habits.
- Limiting phone use helps students understand when technology is appropriate and when it is not
- Social media can increase anxiety, comparison, and fear of missing out (FOMO).
- Phone-free time reduces pressure to constantly check notifications and improves emotional wellbeing.
- Without phones, students are more likely to talk, play, and build face-to-face social skills during breaks and lunchtimes.
- Supports stronger relationships including improved communication, empathy, and friendship development.
- Less peer pressure to own latest and most expensive devices

Improved concentration, engagement, learning and progress

- Phones distract students with messages, games, and social media.
- Even silent phones can reduce attention and memory during lessons.
- Removing phones helps students stay focused on teaching and tasks reducing cognitive overload.
- Studies have shown that students—especially low prior attaining and disadvantaged pupils—often perform better when phone use is restricted.
- Lessons move faster and with fewer interruptions.
- Teachers spend less time policing phone use.
- Lessons are calmer, more structured, and easier to manage

Government position on mobile phones

- The government expects all schools to be mobile phone-free environments by default.
- Schools are expected to prohibit mobile phone use throughout the entire school day, including in lessons, between lessons, breaktimes and lunchtime.
- This expectation applies not just to phones but also to other smart devices with similar functions (e.g. messaging or recording).
- Schools are expected to have a clear, consistently enforced policy on mobile phone use that is understood by students, staff and parents.

Overview of Research

A growing body of research and school-based evidence has explored the impact of mobile phone restriction in schools. While findings are nuanced, there is increasing practical and emerging empirical support for approaches that eliminate access to mobile phones during the school day - particularly where this is implemented consistently through systems such as secure pouches.

1. Evidence on mobile phone restriction in schools
Research has consistently identified a link between high levels of smartphone use and poorer educational and behavioural outcomes, including lower attainment, disrupted sleep, and increased distraction. Earlier large-scale quantitative research in England found **that** introducing mobile phone bans was associated with improved pupil performance, with the greatest gains seen among lower-attaining students. However, more recent studies highlight an important limitation:

- Restrictive policies in isolation do not automatically improve attainment or wellbeing
- Broader factors (home use, social media habits, culture) remain significant

Key implications for schools:
Mobile phone policies are most effective when implemented as part of a wider behaviour, culture, and safeguarding strategy, rather than as a standalone intervention.

2. Evidence supporting "no access" approaches
The Department for Education and sector guidance increasingly emphasise that policies which fully remove access during the school day are more effective than partial restrictions. Case study evidence shows that even in schools with existing bans, hidden phone use persists without robust systems, undermining policy impact.

This has led to a shift towards systems-based approaches (e.g. pouches, central storage), which:

- remove ambiguity
- reduce staff workload
- eliminate "grey areas" in enforcement

3. Key conclusions from the evidence base
Across research and practice, several consistent themes emerge:

- *Access matters more than policy wording*: Systems that remove access are more effective than rules alone
- *Implementation consistency is critical*: Weak enforcement significantly reduces impact
- *Whole-school and Trust alignment is essential*: Policies must sit within behaviour, safeguarding, and culture
- *Impact is strongest on behaviour and school climate*: Effects on attainment are more variable and indirect
- *Pouch systems provide a scalable, enforceable model*: Particularly effective in large secondary settings

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Use of mobile phones by staff

1. Modelling responsible behaviour

We recognise that mobile phones are an integral part of everyday life for our staff. We expect staff to model responsible behaviour to our students. We ask staff not to use personal mobile phones when students are present, because:

- it does not set a professional and positive example to students and parents
- it has the potential to impact negatively on the students' learning
- it has the potential to reduce our ability to supervise students effectively and ensure their safety and wellbeing

Staff should ensure that their use of personal mobile phone is at all times in line with the ICT Acceptable Use Agreement and the Staff Code of Conduct.

Under no circumstances should a personal mobile phone/device be used to take photographs of students.

2. Appropriate use of personal mobile phones for work purposes:

In some circumstances, it may be appropriate for staff to use personal mobile phones for work purposes, for example when accessing multi-factor authorisation apps and access urgent emails. In such cases, mobile phones should not remain visible once the necessary activity has been completed.

1. Staff use of school devices

Some members of staff in school, for example, site staff, may be issued with a school mobile phone, where they need to use one as part of their role. While recognising this, we ask these staff to minimise mobile phone use in corridors and that these calls are made from office bases.

2. Appropriate use of personal mobile phones

The use of personal mobile phones must be restricted to non-contact time, and to areas of the school where students are not present (such as the staffroom). Staff should be mindful of colleagues when using phones.

There may be circumstances in which it is appropriate for a member of staff to use of their mobile phone during contact time for personal reasons. For instance:

- for emergency contact by their child, or their child's school
- in the case of acutely ill dependents or family members - the management of a medical condition

This should be discussed with the appropriate Line Manager or the Headteacher.

3. Staff use of personal mobile phones on educational visits and residential visits

While on an educational visit, staff are acting in loco parentis, and therefore need to ensure that appropriate supervision is in place at all times. Staff should not ordinarily access their personal mobile phones while directly supervising students, except in an emergency. Where possible, staff will be given a school mobile phone for the purpose of contacting students, parents/carers and school as needed.

Particularly when school trips run outside of normal working hours, or when they are not directly supervising students, we recognise that staff will want to access their mobile phones, but this should be done in a responsible and professional manner.

4. Communication with parents and outside agencies

Staff should not use personal mobile phones to communicate with parents or outside agencies except in an emergency and must not give out their personal phone number for this purpose. If using their phone in an emergency, staff should ensure that their Caller ID is not visible (their phone number is not displayed). Call log history should be deleted immediately following the call to ensure the phone number is not saved on a member of staff's personal phone.

Use of mobile phones by students

1. Bringing phones to school

Children are discouraged from bringing their phones to school except when children are independently getting themselves to and from school, however, this is done at their own risk. This means it is the student's responsibility to keep it safe, and the school will not accept responsibility for loss, damage or theft whilst on the school grounds or while students are travelling to and from school

2. Management of phones during the school day

The following procedures are in place to manage mobile phone usage during the school day:

- The children are expected to keep their phones in their bags on arrival at school
- When they enter the classroom the children hand phones to their class teacher
- The phones will then be placed in the school office until then end of the school day
- At dismissal time the phones will be collected from the school office and then redistributed to children as they leave, and children place them in their bags until they leave the grounds.
- If any phones are visible whilst on the grounds they will be confiscated and parents informed.

Students needing to contact home in an emergency should speak to a trusted adult where they will be supported to use a school telephone if deemed appropriate.

Exceptions on medical grounds

Where students require access to their mobile phone for the direct management of a medical condition, such as those who wear a glucose monitor for diabetes, we will permit its use during the school day.

We expect these students to act responsibly in accordance with any individual agreements made. Parents or carers should contact the Headteacher to request such permission.

Confiscation of mobile phones

If a phone is seen or heard during the school day or found to be in a student's pocket, staff will confiscate it as a prohibited item.

Where a member of staff confiscates a mobile phone, it should be taken directly to Main Reception where it will be stored. Phones will be available for collection at the end of the school day.

Non-Compliance

Students must follow the academy expectations on mobile phones. It is expected that all students follow instructions first time every time from any member of staff without question, including requests to hand over their phone. Where a student does not adhere to our expectations, sanctions will apply. See non-compliance sanctions section.

Use of mobile phones by parents/carers, volunteers, and visitors on site

We ask our visitors to refrain from using their mobile phones when students are present. If this is unavoidable, they must ensure that they:

- do not take pictures or recordings of students
- do not use phones in lessons, or when working with students

We ask contractors to ensure that they remain professional in their use of mobile phones on site.
Visitors will be informed of the rules for mobile phone use when they sign in at reception or attend a public event at school.

Frequently Asked Questions

Question	Answer
Why does the school remove mobile phones from children during school days?	The children not having access to mobile phones, helps create a calm, focused environment that supports student wellbeing, behaviour and engagement.
How does the system work?	Students do not use their phones once entering the school grounds. On entering school, the children hand their phones to the teacher in charge of the class, who will place them in a zip wallet, and they will be taken to the school office. They will remain in the office for the remainer of the day. At the end of the day, the wallet will be collected, and the class teacher will distribute phones to children which are not to be used until they leave site.
Can students still use their phones before and after school?	Yes. Phones can be used before arriving at school and after leaving the school site. They're only secured during the school day.
Can phones be used for learning in lessons?	No. All learning resources are provided by the school, so students don't need personal mobile devices during lessons.

What if my child needs their phone for medical reasons?	Where appropriate, students may be issued with an alternative pouch, such as a Velcro or non-locking version, to support approved medical needs like diabetes monitoring apps. These arrangements are agreed in advance with the school.
What about smart watches, Air Pods and other electronical devices?	Children are not permitted to use these in school.
What happens during an emergency?	Students follow staff instructions and school safety procedures. Phone use during emergencies can delay responses and spread misinformation, so all communication with families is managed directly through the school.
How can I contact my child during the school day?	Contact the school office. Urgent messages will be passed on promptly. If a student needs to contact home, office staff will support them.

What happens if a phone is seen outside the pouch?	The phone will be confiscated and returned in line with the school behaviour policy. Searches may also be carried out where staff reasonably believe a student is concealing a phone.
What happens if my child arrives late or leaves early?	The children hand there phone directly to the office on arrival and collect it from the office on request as they leave.
What happens if my child refuses to hand-in their phone?	Non-compliance is treated as a serious issue and is dealt with in line with the academy's behaviour policy

Powers of search and confiscation

Sir Edmund Hillary perates within the two sets of legal provisions which enable the academy staff to confiscate items from students.

The general power to discipline enables a member of staff to confiscate, retain or dispose of a student's property as a punishment, so long as it is reasonable in the circumstances. The law protects staff from liability for damage to, or loss of, any confiscated items provided they have acted lawfully.

Under common law, school staff have the power to search a student for any item. This includes a mobile phone.

If a student refuses to cooperate, the member of staff may sanction the student in line with the school's behaviour policy, ensuring that they are responding to misbehaviour consistently and fairly.

If a student continues to refuse to cooperate, the Academy will follow the protocols outlined in the Behaviour Policy.

Following the confiscation of the mobile phone the parent will be contacted and asked to collect the phone from the school office.

When conducting a search an appropriate location for a search will be found and will be conducted away from other students. Where possible, the staff conducting the search will be of the same sex as the student being searched. There will be another member of staff present as a witness to the search.

A member of staff can search a student of the opposite sex and/or with or without a witness present only:

- If the member of staff conducting the search reasonably believes there is a risk that serious harm will be caused to a person if the search is not conducted as a matter of urgency; **and**
- In the time available, it is not reasonably practicable for the search to be conducted by a member of staff who is the same sex of the student, or it is not reasonably practicable for the search to be conducted in the presence of another member of staff.

If a search is conducted without a witness, the member of staff who conducted the search will immediately report this to another member of staff and ensure a record of the search is kept.

A member of staff may search a student's outer clothing, pockets, possessions including their bag. Staff conducting the search must not require the student to remove any clothing other than outer clothing. 'Outer clothing' means any item of clothing that is not worn wholly next to the skin or immediately over a garment that is being worn as underwear, as well as hats, shoes, boots or scarves.

'Possessions' means any goods over which the student has or appears to have control – this includes bags.

This policy relates to other academy policies

- Behaviour
- Suspensions and Exclusions
- Safeguarding policy