Mobile phone policy

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2.0	Updated in line with statutory guidance, 'Mobile phones in schools'
1.1	Addition of Annex 5 setting out academy-specific sanctions
1.0	Introduction of a Trust-wide policy

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1. Introduction and aims

As a Trust, we recognise that mobile phones and similar devices, including smartwatches, are an important part of everyday life for our pupils, parents/carers and staff, as well as the wider school community.

Our policy aims to:

- Promote safe and responsible phone and smart watch use
- Set clear guidelines for the use of mobile phones for pupils, staff, parents/carers, visitors and volunteers.

Please note: throughout this policy, 'mobile phone' refers to mobile phones and similar devices, including smartwatches (watches with functionality beyond just 'telling the time').

Mobile phones now include many additional functions such as an integrated camera, video recording capability, instant messaging, mobile office applications and mobile access to the internet. These allow immediate access to email, searching for information on the internet and other functions such as access to social networking sites e.g. Facebook, X, Snapchat and WhatsApp. These functions can pose a risk to the maintenance of good discipline, the focus on learning and, crucially, the effective safeguarding of students in schools. This includes the risk of sophisticated bullying via social media platforms.

In some cases, mobile phone use within secondary school environments has created serious child protection concerns. Bullying, intimidation and harassment are not new in society; however, bullying using a mobile phone represents a significant challenge for schools to manage.

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
- Potential for lesson disruption
- Risk of theft, loss, or damage
- Appropriate use of technology in the classroom.

2. Relevant guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the Department for Education's non-statutory mobile phone guidance and behaviour guidance. 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 Academy Principal/Executive Headteacher is responsible for monitoring the policy every year, reviewing it, 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 Trustees and governors

Executive leaders are responsible for reviewing and agreeing this policy annually. There will be regular updates on the implementation of the policy through the Principal/ Executive Headteacher's report to the academy's Governance Committee (GC) and through the CEO's report to Trustees.

4. Use of mobile phones by staff

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 children 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 is 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's school
- In the case of acutely ill dependents or family members

The Executive Headteacher/Principal 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 Copilot)

Further information can be found in the ICT acceptable use policy and the Trust data protection policy.

4.3 Safeguarding

Staff must not give their personal contact details to parents/carers or pupils, 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 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 is 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 for work. Such circumstances may include, but are not limited to:

- Issuing homework, rewards or sanctions
- 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 unavoidable, staff should withhold their number when making contact. Preferably, contact should be made via the school office or using a school mobile phone.

4.5 Sanctions

Staff that fail to adhere to this policy may face disciplinary action. See the staff disciplinary policy for more information.

5. Use of mobile phones by pupils

5.1 Use of mobile phones

This policy is to support a focused and respectful learning environment by limiting the distractions and social pressures caused by mobile phones. To achieve this, we are implementing the use of lockable pouches for all students in lower school during the school day.

Why are we doing this?

We want to create a positive learning environment for all students and believe school should be a place where:

- Students focus on learning and real-life connections.
- Classrooms are distraction-free.
- Social pressure and screen time are minimised.
- Everyone is more present and engaged.

Mobile phone usage for Years 9-11 Students:

- Place all mobile phones in a lockable pouch before entering school. This will be checked by a member of staff.
- Ensure phones remain secure in the pouch throughout the school day. Students will unlock their pouches as they leave the school site. If students need to leave school early a member of staff will unlock their pouch before leaving
- Students can keep their pouches with them but cannot access their phones until the end of the school day.
- Will have consequences and sanctions applied if students violate the policy. If a parent/carer needs to contact a student in an emergency, then this must go through the school office.

To that end, the Trust has adopted the following approach:

- Pupils are allowed to bring mobile phones to and from school to support their personal safety.
- Pupils **must not** use a mobile device, smart watch or electronic device including headphones anywhere in school during the school day. For the purposes of this policy, the school day begins the moment the pupils enter the school site and ends once the pupils leave the school site. Mobile phones or smart watches will not be permitted to be used at any after school extra-curricular clubs.
- Any pupil found using or known to have used their phone or smart device during the school day will be subject to academy-specific sanctions set out at **Appendix 5.**

Sanctions may include confiscation of the mobile phone or device. All staff are permitted to confiscate phones from pupils under sections 91 and 94 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. Where confiscated, the device will be returned in line with the academy's agreed processes set out at **Appendix 5.**

- Any refusal to hand over a phone or device to a member of staff would constitute the refusal of a reasonable request by a member of staff and will result in a sanction in line with the academy's Behaviour Policy.

5.2 Use of smartwatches by pupils

The use of a smartwatch for receiving or sending communication during the school day will be dealt with as above.

5.3 Exceptions for special circumstances and for sixth form students

The school may permit pupils to use a mobile phone in school in special circumstances. Instances might include:

- Pupils who are deaf or with a hearing impairment, who may have linked hearing devices for audio recordings in lessons.
- Pupils with diabetes, who use their phones to monitor their blood sugar.

Such requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis. To request such permission, pupils or parents/carers should complete the request form at Appendix 2 and submit it to the Principal/Executive Headteacher for consideration. Any pupils who are given permission must then adhere to the academy's ICT acceptable use policy (see Appendix 1).

5.3.1 Sixth form

Where applicable, the Trust permits use of mobile phones for sixth-form pupils. No additional permission is required.

Sixth-form pupils are allowed access to their mobile phones during the school day, to reflect their increased independence and responsibility, but must not compromise our policy on the use of mobile phones for other pupils. Therefore, they are only permitted to use their mobile phones in the sixth form common areas which include the common room, breakout space and S@G cafe. Misuse of mobile phones by pupils in the sixth form will lead to sanctions according to the academy's behaviour policy.

5.4 Searches

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 you to search 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).

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, 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 Part 1 of Keeping Children Safe in Education.

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:

- Sexting (consensual and non-consensual sharing nude or semi-nude images or videos)
- Upskirting
- Threats of violence or assault
- Abusive calls, emails, social media posts or texts directed at someone based on someone's ethnicity, religious beliefs or sexual orientation.

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 pupils, unless it is 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, or when working with pupils.

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 contact 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, 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 should 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 ensure that the phones are stored securely in their lockable pouch within their bag.

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 and from school.

Confiscated phones will be stored securely.

Confiscated phones from pupils become the responsibility of the school until the phone is collected.

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

Lost or Damaged Pouches

- Students are responsible for the care of their lockable pouches.
- Lost or intentionally damaged pouches will result in a replacement fee.
- Tampering with or forcing open a pouch is considered a violation of school policy and a relevant sanction will be applied.

8. Monitoring and review

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

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

Appendix 1: Acceptable use agreement for pupils allowed to bring their phones to school due to exceptional circumstances

Acceptable use agreement

You must follow the following rules if you bring your mobile phone to school:

1. You may not use your mobile phone during lessons
2. Phones must be switched off (not just put on 'silent') and stored in your bag out of sight for the duration of the school day
3. You may not use your mobile phone in the toilets or changing rooms. This is to protect the privacy and welfare of other pupils.
4. You cannot take photos or recordings (either video or audio) of school staff or other pupils without their consent.
5. Avoid sharing your contact details with people you don't know, and don't share other people's contact details without their consent.
6. Don't share your phone's password(s) or access code(s) with anyone else.
7. Don't use your mobile phone to bully, intimidate or harass anyone. This includes bullying, harassing or intimidating pupils or staff via:
    a. Email
    b. Text/messaging app
    c. Social media
8. Don't use your phone to send or receive anything that may be criminal. For instance, by 'sexting'.
9. Rules on bullying, harassment and intimidation apply to how you use your mobile phone even when you aren't in school.
10. Don't use vulgar, obscene or derogatory language while on the phone or when using social media. This language is not permitted under the school's behaviour policy.
11. Don't use your phone to view or share pornography or other harmful content.
12. You must comply with a request by a member of staff to switch off, or hand over, a phone. Refusal to comply is a breach of the school's behaviour policy and will be dealt with accordingly.
13. Mobile phones are not permitted in any internal or external exam or test environment. If you have a mobile phone, you will be asked to store it appropriately, or turn it over to an exam invigilator, before entering the test room. Bringing a phone into the test room can result in your exam/test being declared invalid.

Appendix 2: Permission form allowing a pupil to bring their phone to school (exceptional circumstances)

PUPIL DETAILS	
Pupil name:	
Year group/class:	
Parent/carer(s) name(s):	
Reason(s) for request:	

Pupils who bring a mobile phone to school must abide by the school's policy on the use of mobile phones, and its acceptable use agreement.

Parent/carer signature: _____

Pupil signature (year 9 and above): _____

The school has agreed to allow <pupil name> to bring their mobile phone to school because they, for the above reason(s). The school reserves the right to revoke permission if a pupil does not abide by the policy.

FOR SCHOOL USE ONLY	
Authorised by:	
Date:	

Appendix 3: Template mobile phone information slip for visitors

Use of mobile phones and similar devices in our school

- 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 reception
- Do not take photos or recordings of pupils (unless it is your own child), or staff
- Do not use your phone in lessons, or when working with pupils

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.

Appendix 4: Frequently asked questions

What are the new restrictions?

- Pupils must not use their phone (without permission from a member of staff) at any point during the school day once they cross the threshold into school and until they leave the school site. If phones are brought on site, they must be switched off and kept in bags for the duration of the school day.

- *Are there any exceptions or exemptions?*

  If a pupil needs to use their phone in school, they should only do so with the prior permission of the school.

  Sixth Formers will be given the privilege to use their phone in the Sixth Form Common Room. Breakout Space and Sport@Gosforth Café.

- *What if I need to contact my child during the day?*

  Please phone school reception and they can pass any urgent messages on.

- *What about when pupils are on trips or fixtures?*

  The policy will still apply. Pupils will not have free access to phones; however, staff may give permission for use to update on travel times or allow phone use at designated times on trips.

- *Will there be any sanctions if pupils break the restrictions?*

  Yes. Pupils can expect to have their phone confiscated on the spot and will have to retrieve the phone at the end of the school day. A planner comment will be issued. For those who accrue a second or more confiscation in the same half term, then the phone will be held at school until the end of the current school week. Should this continue to occur in the next half term, then the pastoral team will liaise with parents to establish a plan.

Appendix 5: Academy-specific sanctions

Applicable to:

- *Gosforth Junior High Academy*
- *Great Park Academy*
- *North Gosforth Academy*

Any pupil found using or known to have used their phone or smart device during the school day will have the phone or device confiscated and returned at the end of the school day via a pastoral member of staff/school admin staff. Parents/carers will receive communication home, and a comment will be made in the pupil's planner.

For repeat offences, the school will request a parent/carer to come in and collect the phone or device from school at the end of the school week.

Applicable to:

- *Callerton Academy*
- *Gosforth Academy*
- *Jesmond Park Academy*

Any pupil seen with a phone will have the phone confiscated. Confiscated phones will be placed in the school safe located in student reception.

Students may reclaim their own phones from student reception at 2:40pm on Friday each week, without the need for parents to come in.

If parents/carers wish to reclaim confiscated phones before the end of the week, they may do so from student reception. Only parents/carers listed on SIMS as contacts will be able to reclaim phones and ID must be presented. If a phone is confiscated on a Friday it will be kept until the following Monday at 2:40pm.