

Birches Head Academy



Mobile Phone Policy

Birches Head Academy

Policy Information:

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Adopted by Governors	Autumn 2026
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Review Date	Autumn 2028

Approved by Head of School:

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Approved by Chair of Governors:

S. Finlay

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1. Introduction and aims

At Birches Head Academy, 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 is [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#).

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 policy 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 Executive Head Teacher / Head of School is responsible for monitoring the policy and reviewing it bi-annually 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

This policy will be reviewed bi-annually by the Local Governing Body (LGB).

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 children are present and 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 headteacher 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 01782 233595 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).

Detailed guidance for staff regarding data protection responsibilities, information security, and the use of school ICT systems is available in the school's Data Protection Policy, ICT Acceptable Use Policy, and related guidance documents, which can be accessed here [Policies & Procedures - Birches Head Academy](#)

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's necessary to take photos or recordings as part of a lesson / school trip / activity, this must be done using school equipment.

Links should be made to the Staff Behaviour & Code of Conduct and the Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy.

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 using the Trust phone system 3CX.

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 is 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 staff (for example, for a specific medical reason).

Pupils who bring a mobile phone to school must place their device in a school-issued locked mobile phone pouch before entering the school building each morning. Mobile phones must remain secured within the locked pouch and stored in the pupil's bag throughout the school day, including during lessons, social times and movement around the school. The pouch must not be opened until the pupil has left the school building at the end of the day. To ensure reasonable adjustments are made for pupils with specific medical needs, such as pupils with diabetes who use continuous glucose monitoring systems connected to a smart device, the school will provide a Velcro mobile phone pouch. This allows the pupil to access their device when necessary for medical monitoring and management, whilst maintaining the principles of this policy.

Pupils will be taught the risks that are associated with the use of mobile phones, both in school and more broadly, to ensure 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 their policy.

Smartwatches and other personal electronic devices, including tablets, headphones and earbuds, must not be used during the school day. On arrival at school, pupils must place any such devices in their school bag, where they must remain for the duration of the school day, including during lessons, social times and movement around the school.

These devices must not be visible or used on the school site unless explicitly authorised by a member of staff for a specific educational, safeguarding or medical purpose. Any pupil found using a smartwatch or other electronic device in breach of this policy will be subject to the sanctions outlined in section 5.3. The school may make reasonable adjustments for pupils with documented medical needs where the use of an electronic device is required.

5.2 Exceptions for special circumstances

The school may permit pupils to use a mobile phone in school, due to exceptional circumstances. Permission will only be granted where there is a documented safeguarding or medical necessity. To request such permission, pupils or parents/carers should contact Head of School.

Any pupils who are given permission must then adhere to the school's policies & procedures.

5.3 Sanctions

Any pupil found in possession of a mobile phone that is not secured within their locked mobile phone pouch during the school day will have the device confiscated by a member of staff. The mobile phone will be securely stored by the school and must be collected by a parent/carer from the main reception.

Where a mobile phone is confiscated for a second time during the academic year, the device will be confiscated and retained by the school overnight. The mobile phone may be collected by a parent/carer from the main reception on the following school day. (Schools are permitted to confiscate phones from pupils under [sections 91](#) and [94](#) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. The Head of School can confiscate mobile phones and similar devices for the length of time they deem proportionate, according to the [DfE's guidance on mobile phones in schools](#))

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 if pastoral support, an early intervention, or a referral to children's social care, is appropriate

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).

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 on the basis of someone's ethnicity, religious beliefs or sexual orientation

Links should be made to the Pupil Behaviour & Safety Policy.

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

Parents 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 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 a public 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, 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 must not try to contact their child on their personal mobile during the school day.

7. Loss, theft or damage

Pupils who bring mobile phones to school do so at their own risk. All mobile phones must be secured in the school's approved locking pouch system on arrival to the school site. Pupils who do not have their pouch must place their phone in a designated secure locker for the duration of the school day.

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 Academy accepts no responsibility for mobile phones or other personal electronic devices that are lost, stolen or damaged whilst on the school site, during educational visits, or when travelling to and from school. Pupils are responsible for ensuring that their devices are clearly identifiable and protected by appropriate security measures, such as passwords or PIN codes.

Any mobile phone found on site should be handed to Reception, where reasonable steps will be taken to identify and contact the owner. Parents/carers and pupils will be made aware of this policy through the school website and home-school communications.

Pupils will be reminded of their responsibilities regarding mobile phones through assemblies, Academic Review sessions, and staff guidance at the start of each academic year. Parents/carers will be informed that mobile phones are brought onto the school site at their own risk and that Birches Head Academy accepts no responsibility for devices that are lost, stolen or damaged whilst on the school site, during educational visits, or whilst travelling to and from school. The Academy will communicate these expectations through the Mobile Phone Policy, the Academy website, parent communications, and student induction materials.

8. Monitoring and review

The school is committed to ensuring 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
- Records of behaviour and safeguarding incidents
- Relevant advice from the Department for Education, 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 outside main reception.
- 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.

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