



**William Henry
Smith Foundation**

Mobile-Free School Policy

Policy Details

Status:	In-house
Frequency of review:	Annual
Lead member of staff:	Damien Talbot
Last reviewed:	Spring Term 2026
Next Review Date:	Spring Term 2027
Policy Number:	FWS 57

1. Purpose

This policy sets out how the school will maintain a **mobile–phone–free environment during the teaching day**, following the **DfE’s updated guidance (19 February 2026)** which states that all schools should prohibit the use of mobile phones and similar smart devices across the entire school day, including lessons, transitions, breaktimes, and lunchtime. [\[gov.uk\]](#)

As a **residential special school**, we must also ensure that our approach meets national minimum standards for boarding and the safety and welfare of children and young people in residential settings. The guidance clarifies that residential/special schools must ban the use of mobile phones during the teaching day and develop appropriate policies for use during residential time. [\[gov.uk\]](#)

Ofsted inspections from **1 April 2026** will consider how well this policy is communicated, understood, and implemented. [\[educationi...log.gov.uk\]](#)

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All **children and young people** (day and residential)
- All staff (see **FWS42** Personal Electronics Devices Policy)
- Parents and carers
- Visitors

It covers mobile phones, smartphones, smartwatches, and any device with messaging, notification, or recording capabilities. [\[gov.uk\]](#)

3. Policy Statement

3.1 Mobile–Free Teaching Day

During the **entire teaching day**, **children and young people** must not use, see, or hear mobile phones or similar devices. The DfE states that schools must operate on a **mobile–free default**, with any exceptions being carefully justified. [\[gov.uk\]](#)

3.2 Residential Arrangements

Outside of the formal teaching day—mornings, evenings, and weekends—**children and young people** in residence may have **controlled, supervised, or time–limited** access to mobile phones.

Residential schools are required to establish their own safe and welfare-focused rules for this time. [\[gov.uk\]](#)

4. Rationale

Guidance and research highlight several concerns associated with mobile phone use:

- Mobile phones cause **learning disruption** and reduce concentration. [\[phb.co.uk\]](#)
- They create **safeguarding risks**, including exposure to harmful online content, bullying, social-media pressure, and mental-health challenges.
- In special schools, where some children and young people may already struggle with emotional regulation, mobile phones can contribute to **worsening behaviour**. [\[researchbr...liament.uk\]](#)
- They undermine the aim of maintaining a **calm, safe, supportive learning environment**, as emphasised in DfE behaviour guidance. [\[gov.uk\]](#)

For residential settings, structured limitations also ensure safe communication routines and appropriate supervision.

5. Approaches and Practical Arrangements

5.1 Teaching-Day Arrangements

The school will use one or more DfE-recommended approaches, such as:

- Children are encouraged to have **No** phones brought onto site
 - Phones handed in on arrival
 - Phones stored in secure lockers/drawers or cupboards during the teaching day
- All are accepted models under government guidance.

5.2 Residential-Time Arrangements

During residential hours, **children and young people** may be permitted supervised or structured unsupervised use of phones, depending on:

- Their age
- Individual risk assessments (see individual One Plans)
- Online safety considerations

The DfE requires residential settings to establish policies that safeguard welfare outside teaching time. [\[gov.uk\]](#)

5.3 Online Safety

This policy works alongside:

- *Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025)*
- Behaviour and safeguarding guidance
- Searching, screening, and confiscation expectations (**see FC2**)
- Our online Filtering and Monitoring system, **Smoothwall**.

6. Reasonable Adjustments and Exceptions

The school will make clear and documented exceptions for children and young people who require access for:

- Medical needs (e.g., diabetes monitoring apps) [phb.co.uk]
- Individual communication needs
- Disability accommodations
- Religious reasons
- Young carers or vulnerable situations requiring emergency contact [phb.co.uk]

Each exception will be individually risk-assessed and regularly reviewed and included on a child's individual One Plan.

7. Communication of the Policy

Schools must publish their mobile phone policy clearly and share it with all members of the school community.

We will: [doyleclayton.co.uk]

- Publish the policy on the school website
- Explain it during admissions, induction, and residential onboarding
- Provide accessible versions for families where required
- Ask families and children and young people to confirm understanding

8. Enforcement and Consistency

Ofsted expects mobile-phone rules to be applied **consistently** across the organisation, including residential provision. [educationi...log.gov.uk]

The school will:

- Apply this policy
- Issue proportionate consequences for breaches in line with our PBS approach
- Log incidents to identify patterns or risks

- Ensure residential and education staff work collaboratively to maintain consistency

Confiscation

If a child or young person uses a device without permission:

- Staff may confiscate it under DfE's searching and screening guidance
- The device will be stored securely
- Repeat incidents may require parental collection (of the device) or the need for an individual behaviour plan [[phb.co.uk](https://www.phb.co.uk)]

9. Residential Safeguarding Considerations

For children and young people living on site:

- Phone use will be time-bound and supervised to meet residential safeguarding standards
- Staff will support safe online behaviours and manage any anxieties or vulnerabilities
- Supervised alternatives (e.g., staff-supported calls, structured video calls) will be offered when restrictions apply for safeguarding reasons

10. Staff Use of Mobile Phones for Safeguarding Purposes

10.1 Policy Position

While the school operates a **mobile-free environment for children and young people during the teaching day**, this restriction **does not apply to staff**.

Staff are **permitted and, where required, expected to carry mobile phones** in order to meet safeguarding, welfare, and duty-of-care responsibilities.

This distinction is consistent with **DfE mobile phone guidance**, which applies mobile-free expectations to children and young people rather than staff, and with safeguarding guidance requiring effective communication systems.

10.2 Safeguarding Rationale

Access to mobile phones allows staff to:

- respond immediately to safeguarding or medical emergencies,
- seek senior leadership input without delay,
- contact emergency services where required,
- support lone-working and on-call duties,
- maintain effective communication during off-site activities,

- ensure safe supervision across education and residential provision.

In a residential special school, rapid and reliable communication is essential to safeguarding children and young people at all times.

10.3 Professional Expectations for Staff

Staff must:

- use mobile phones professionally and proportionately,
- prioritise safeguarding, emergency and operational communication,
- avoid personal use during direct teaching or supervision unless necessary,
- comply with the school's Code of Conduct, Safeguarding, Acceptable Use and Data Protection policies.
- **ONLY** use their phones for personal reason when they are not in structured time with children and only when on a planned break (break time, admin time away from children)

Staff must **never**:

- take photographs or recordings of children and young people on personal devices,
- communicate with children and young people via personal social media or messaging apps,
- allow phone use to compromise supervision or professional boundaries.

Any misuse is managed through established disciplinary and safeguarding procedures.

11. Monitoring and Review

School leaders will monitor:

- Behaviour and safeguarding data
- Confiscation patterns
- Feedback from staff, families, and children and young people
- Impact on wellbeing and learning

This policy will be formally reviewed **annually** or earlier if new DfE or Ofsted guidance emerges.

Ofsted inspections will consider how clearly and effectively mobile-free expectations are communicated, understood, and enforced. [educationi...log.gov.uk]

12. Related Documents

- Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Equality Duty Statement
- **FC1** Personal possessions.docx
- **FC2** Searching of students and personal property.docx