ACCEPTABLE USE OF MOBILE PHONES POLICY

Ocean Academy

Version control	
July 2026	Reviewed, updated in line with DfE statutory guidance 'Mobile Phones in Schools' June 2026
Sept 2024	Reviewed, policy updated in line with DfE 'Mobile phones in schools' Guidance 2024
Sept 2022	Reviewed, no changes
April 2021	Update to align with AUPs (staff, pupils) and update reference to Safeguarding and CP policy

Date of next review:	Sept 2028	Owner:	Trust Safeguarding Lead
Type of policy:	Network	Approval level:	Executive Operational Board

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A. Personal electronic devices agreement

Statement of intent

Mobile phones, tablets and other personal electronic devices have become widely available and accessible to pupils. This policy is designed to prohibit the use of mobile phones and similar smart technology throughout the school day, including break and lunch times.

Ocean Academy accepts that personal mobile phones and tablets are often given to pupils by their parents to ensure their safety and personal security, but understands that such devices pose inherent risks and may jeopardise the learning environment.

As a school, we must strike a balance between personal safety and a suitable educational setting. We understand that parents may wish for their child to carry a mobile phone for their personal safety. This policy establishes how personal electronic devices should be used by pupils in school to ensure both personal safety and an appropriate learning environment.

Personal electronic devices include, but are not limited to the following items:

- Mobile phones
- Smart watches
- Wearable recording devices, including glasses
- Personal digital assistants (PDAs)
- Handheld entertainment systems, e.g. video game consoles, iPods
- Portable internet devices, e.g. tablets, laptops
- Wireless handheld technologies or portable information technology systems, e.g. devices used for word processing, wireless internet access, image capture and/or recording, sound recording, and information transmitting, receiving and/or storing

1. Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory and good practice guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- DfE (2026) 'Mobile phones in schools'

  DfE (2026) 'Communicating your policy for prohibiting the use of mobile phones in schools to parents'
- DfE (2024) 'Behaviour in Schools'
- DfE (2026) 'Keeping children safe in education'
- DfE (2023) 'Searching, screening and confiscation at school'
- Data Protection Act 2018
- The UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- Voyeurism (Offences) Act 2019
- Protection of Children Act 1978
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- DfE 'Cyberbullying: Advice for headteachers and school staff'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Anti-bullying Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Searching, Screening and Confiscation Policy

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Complaints Procedures Policy
- Social Media Policy
- Child-on-child Abuse Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Staff Behaviour Policy
- Records Management Policy

2. Roles and responsibilities

The governing board will be responsible for:

- The implementation of the policy and procedures.
- Evaluating the effectiveness of the policy and procedures.
- Ensuring that the policy, as written, does not discriminate on any grounds.
- Reviewing the policy every 2 years.

The principal will be responsible for:

- Handling complaints regarding this policy as outlined in the school's Complaints Procedures Policy.
- The day-to-day implementation and management of the policy.
- Informing parents and pupils of the Personal Electronic Devices Agreement.
- Communicating this policy to the relevant staff members and the wider school community.
- Communicating what devices can be brought to school and when they can and cannot be used.

- Deciding how best to achieve a mobile phone-free school environment.

Staff members will be responsible for:

- Negotiating incidents of cyberbullying in conjunction with the principal, in line with the Anti-bullying Policy and the Behaviour Policy.

- Applying this policy consistently and proportionately, including confiscating devices where appropriate.

- Reporting any safeguarding concerns to the DSL, or deputy, where misuse indicates risk of harm.

- Not using their mobile phones in front of pupils for any non-work related issues.
- Teaching pupils about the risks associated with mobile phones, other devices and social media, both in school and more broadly.

The DSL will be responsible for:

- Initiating and managing responses to incidents of upskirting with relevant staff members and in line with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.
- Liaising with and reporting the relevant information to children's social care and/or the police, when it is necessary to do so.

Pupils are responsible for adhering to the provisions outlined in this policy.

3. Ownership and responsibility

Pupils are responsible for their own belongings. The school accepts no responsibility for replacing property that is lost, stolen or damaged either on school premises or travelling to and from school, and at school events.

Staff will be protected against liability in any proceedings brought against them for any loss or damage to personal devices that have been confiscated as an appropriate sanction, provided that they have acted lawfully.

Pupils are responsible for replacing school property they lose, damage or steal, including electronic devices.

Pupils and staff should enable a personal PIN or passcode on all the devices they bring to school to protect their personal data, images and videos in the event that the device is lost, stolen or accessed by an unauthorised person.

4. Acceptable use

Pupils bringing personal electronic devices into school must make their parents aware of this. Pupils will remain responsible for the safety and security of any personal devices brought into school and the academy will not accept responsibility for loss, theft or damage.

Personal electronic devices will be switched off and kept out of sight during the school day. Personal devices will not be used at any point during the school day, including during break and lunch times, unless an agreed exception applies. Where an agreed exception is in place, use of a personal device will be limited strictly to the specific purpose outlined within that exception and will be subject to any conditions set by the school.

5. Unacceptable use

Pupils will be encouraged to avoid bringing phones to school; however, if phones are brought to school they will be switched off and kept in bags as soon as the pupil enters the school site, unless an agreed exception applies.

Unless express permission is granted by the Principal, or adaptations and reasonable adjustments apply, mobile devices will not be seen, heard, or accessed at any time during the school day or on the school site.

Any permitted use for specific pupils will be limited strictly to the specific purpose outlined in the agreed plan. All other use will be prohibited.

The school will consider the risks that may be posed to pupils who do not have access to their mobile phone when organising travel to and from school. Parents will be consulted with, to consider ways to mitigate any concerns around the issue of travel to and from school, for example, the parent will receive a phone call if their child does not arrive for registration, parents can contact the school office if unavoidable last minute changes are made to arrangements for the pupil's travel arrangements. Pupils will be able to access their personal devices when travelling to and from school; however, they should not be used to arrange travel during the course of the school day.

Staff members will be required to model expectations surrounding the use of personal devices when they are in front of pupils throughout the school day, and only use their personal devices where required for work or safeguarding purposes.

Staff and pupils will adhere to the *Social Media Policy* at all times.

Files will not be sent between mobile devices, and Bluetooth and Wi-Fi functions will be disabled while on school premises.

If pupils fall ill during school hours, they will not use their mobile device to contact parents; they will use the agreed procedures.

Under no circumstances will personal electronic devices be taken into examinations. Devices will be switched off and kept in bags or lockers, during the examination. Under no circumstances will mobile devices be used in changing rooms or toilets.

Personal electronic devices will not be plugged into outlets on the school premises without the express permission of the principal, and they will have an up-to-date portable appliance test (PAT).

Staff will not give out their personal contact details to pupils. If correspondence is needed between staff members and pupils for homework or exams, staff must use their school contact email.

Under the Voyeurism (Offences) Act 2019, the act known as "upskirting" is an offence. Any incidents will not be tolerated by the school. Despite the name, anyone (including both pupils and teachers) of any gender, can be a victim of upskirting.

A "specified purpose" is namely:

- Obtaining sexual gratification (either for themselves or for the person they are enabling to view the victim's genitals, buttocks or underwear)
- To humiliate, distress or alarm the victim

Any incidents of upskirting will be reported to the DSL and handled in accordance with the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

6. Adaptations and reasonable adjustments

The academy will comply with its legal duty to make reasonable adjustments with regard to this policy where necessary. Adaptations may be made in exceptional circumstances and in response to a pupil's specific needs.

If it is deemed necessary due to the nature of a pupil's SEND, reasonable adjustments will be made to allow that pupil to use their mobile phone or similar device during the school day.

The school will not prevent pupils from using their mobile phones in order to manage their medical condition effectively, e.g. if a pupil is using a monitoring app on their phone to manage their diabetes.

Beyond these specific duties, the academy recognises that a need for mobile phone access for some pupils may depend on their individual circumstances. The academy will allow limited flexibility for these pupils where an agreed exception is required in the best interests of the pupil's safety and welfare, for example, where a pupil is a young carer.

Where a pupil has an agreed adaptation or reasonable adjustment that requires access to a mobile device, this will be permitted only for the specific purpose and within the limits set out in the agreed plan.

7. Cyberbullying

All personal electronic devices will be used in line with our Online Safety Policy.

Incidents of cyberbullying will be dealt with and reported in line with the Anti-bullying Policy and the Behaviour Policy.

As part of the academy's ongoing commitment to the prevention of cyberbullying, regular teaching and discussion about online safety will take place as part of PSHE lessons.

8. Searching pupils

School pupils have a right for their private life to be respected under article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). This right is not absolute, and the school can interfere with this right as long as it is justified, proportionate, and aligns with the powers to search in the Education Act 1996.

The principal, and other authorised staff members, will have the power to search a pupil or their possessions where they have reasonable grounds to suspect that a pupil is in possession of a prohibited item. Mobile phones and similar devices will be deemed as prohibited items that may be searched for in line with the Behaviour Policy.

In all cases the authorised member of staff will always:

- Seek the co-operation of the pupil before conducting a search.

- Ensure the pupil understands the reason for the search and how it will be conducted.
- Give the pupil the opportunity to ask any questions so that their agreement is informed.
- Have due regard to the DfE's 'Searching, screening and confiscation' guidance.

Staff may search a pupil's outer clothing, pockets, possessions, desks or lockers. Staff conducting a search must not require the pupil 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 and includes hats, shoes, boots or scarves. Possessions means any goods over which the pupil has or appears to have control - this includes desks, lockers and bags.

The staff member conducting the search must be the same sex as the pupil being searched. A witness to the search must be present; this should also be a staff member of the same sex as the pupil being searched.

A staff member may ask a pupil to show them what they are doing on their mobile phone or tablet if they reasonably believe that the pupil is using the device to cause harm. If it is judged reasonable, the staff member may inspect the files or data on a pupil's electronic device and delete them if necessary.

Staff members will ensure they have a good reason to examine and delete data on a pupil's electronic device. When determining a good reason to examine data, staff members will ensure they reasonably suspect that the data has been, or could be, used to cause harm, undermine the safe environment of the school and disrupt teaching, or be used to commit an offence.

When determining a good reason to delete data, staff members will consider whether the material found may constitute evidence relating to a suspected offence and if so, choose not to delete the data. The data may be deleted if it is found likely to cause harm to any person, and the pupil and/or parent refuses to delete the data themselves.

If a search uncovers a device that is being used to cause harm, or which contains prohibited material such as pornography, a staff member can confiscate the device. If a staff member finds child pornography, this must be reported to the DSL immediately and the device given to the police as soon as reasonably practicable. Where staff find

stolen items like mobile devices, they must be given to the police as soon as reasonably practicable.

Pupils are required to comply with any request to check their electronic device.

Pupils are required to comply with any request to disable the screen lock function of their electronic device and show any staff member what they are doing. Any pupil who refuses to comply with these requests will be disciplined in line with the Behaviour Policy.

9. Accessing and storing data

Downloading and accessing inappropriate websites and data on school-owned electronic devices is strictly prohibited.

Storing and using the personal data of any pupil or member of staff for non-work-related activity is strictly prohibited.

All data access requests will be handled in line with the school's Data Protection Policy.

10. Sanctions

Where this policy is clearly breached, for example, where a device is used, seen, or heard ringing, staff will feel confident to confiscate mobile phones or similar devices as a disciplinary penalty. Confiscated devices may be retained for a proportionate length of time, as determined by the Principal and in consideration of the circumstances, including the pupil's age, SEND, and any agreed exceptions or reasonable adjustments.

Additional sanctions may include detentions or other disciplinary measures in accordance with the Behaviour Policy.

Where a breach gives cause to suspect a pupil may be suffering, or may be at risk of, harm, staff will follow the school's safeguarding procedures and report concerns to the DSL.

Confiscated personal electronic devices will be locked away securely in the **academy office**. Confiscated personal electronic devices will be collected by the pupil's parent.

Bullying via personal electronic devices will be dealt with in line with the school's Anti-bullying Policy.

11. Monitoring and review

This policy is reviewed **every 2 years** by the Trust's Safeguarding Lead.

Any changes to this policy will be communicated to members of staff, parents and pupils by the principal.