



Mobile Phone Use Policy

September 1st 2026

Person responsible for the policy:	Lianne Willis
Date Approved:	28.08.26
Signed:	Deputy Head Teacher
Date for Review:	28.08.27, or sooner should legislation require.

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1. Introduction and aims

At OPAL Education Independent School 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, for example i-pads and smart watches etc.

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 includes [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#), which sets out the expectation that all schools should be mobile phone-free environments by default.

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 restrictions 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 DSL, Lianne Willis, is responsible for monitoring the policy and reviewing it every year 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 Proprietor Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the Proprietor to support the DSL to monitor this policy and ensure that all staff, students, parents/carers and visitors adhere to the policy.

4. Use of mobile phones by staff

4.1a Personal mobile phones for personal use

Staff (including volunteers, contractors and anyone else otherwise engaged by the school) are not permitted to use their personal mobile phone for personal reasons during the school day, **while pupils are present**. Their use of personal mobile phones for personal reasons must be restricted to non-contact time or, when working off-site, time where it is possible to be away from pupils.

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 be contacted in an emergency by giving the number of Paul Sperring as a point of emergency contact.

4.1b Personal mobile phones for work purposes (Temporary situation)

Due to our bespoke education packages, our staff often must work off-site with children at previously risk assessed venues. Their use of mobile phones is therefore essential for safeguarding purposes. Our school is in the process of procuring work mobile phones for work purposes but, until these are in place, our staff are allowed to use their mobile phones under strict acceptable use guidelines. (See our acceptable use of technology policy)

At the moment our staff use personal phones for work reasons in the following circumstances:

- To register pupil attendance – using initials of pupils only for data protection purposes.
- To contact school leaders with any change of venue if this has not been decided beforehand, for example if a child is worried about bumping into someone they have fallen out with or if they become anxious in a venue because it has changed or is busier than usual etc
- To take photographs of the child's work evidence **that does not identify the child**.
- To use sat nav or geocaching information
- To complete training courses relevant to their work in school
- For multi-factor authentication
- To contact school leaders in case of emergency, safeguarding issue or to seek advice regarding a work project etc

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).

More detailed guidance with regard to data protection can be found in our acceptable use policy and our data protection policy.

4.3 Safeguarding

As a temporary measure, whilst our work phones are being procured, staff should only give their personal numbers to parents/carers where necessary for co-ordination of their child's programme. As soon as our work mobile phones arrive, parents/carers should be asked to delete the personal phone numbers for staff and replace their contact details with their new work mobile phone number. Should any parent/carer refuse, or continue to use the personal phone for staff after our mobile phones have arrived, staff should contact the Head teacher or DSL, who will contact the parent/carer directly and discuss the matter.

Pupils should **never** be given staff personal numbers, this includes through WhatsApp and other social media apps. Should a child manage to find out the personal number of the staff member, staff should contact The Head teacher or DSL immediately. In this case, the Head teacher or DSL should arrange to meet with the parent/carer and child to discuss the matter and investigate the type of contact between the staff member and child. If the child has contacted the staff member innocently and there are no issues of concern, the child should be told firmly that they should not contact staff on their private number. Parents/carers should support this.

If there are issues of concern regarding the communication between the child and staff member, then one or more of the following may occur:

- The staff member is asked to change their personal phone number
- The child is given a different staff member
- A referral to the LADO or police is made

Staff must avoid publicising their contact details on any social media platform or website, to avoid unwanted contact by parents/carers or pupils. Staff should also not contact children or parents/carers on Facebook, SnapChat or any other social media platforms. If, in the unlikely event that a staff member is related to or friends with, the parent/carer of a child on roll, they should alert the DSL immediately so that they are aware of any personal contact through social media etc.

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. As a **temporary measure only**, if staff use their personal phones, they should be used in a way that photos do not identify pupils. Where personal phones are used for work evidence, any photographs or videos should be uploaded to the school drive at the end of the school day and deleted from personal phones.

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:

- Registering attendance
- Completing training courses
- Requesting permission from school leaders to change venues

- Use of multi-factor authentication
- Emergency evacuations
- Plotting the route of an off-site trip
- Supervising off-site trips
- Supervising residential visits
- Taking photos of work evidence that **do not identify pupils**

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 unless absolutely necessary. (For example a work mobile has no signal but their personal one does and it is an emergency situation)

4.5 Work phones

Due to the bespoke packages we have in place, all of our staff are required to work off-site at some point during the school week. For this reason, all of our lead staff will be given mobile phones for use for work purposes. This phone can be used by any member of staff working alongside the lead teacher in addition to the lead teacher.

Staff must:

- Only use school phone functions for work purposes, including making/receiving calls, sending/receiving emails or other communications, or using the internet
- Make sure that all communication and conduct linked to the device is appropriate and professional at all times, in line with our staff code of conduct

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

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 or anxiety related reason).

At OPAL Education Independent School, we understand that asking a pupil not to bring their mobile phone to school can cause additional anxiety related issues and become a barrier to attendance. Where this is the case, a blanket ban on mobile phones in school could put the child at a greater risk from safeguarding concerns due to their non- attendance. For this reason, we will have individualised mobile phone rules for each child. These will be agreed when the child comes on roll at OPAL, and a personalised agreement will be written and signed by school leaders, parents /carers and the child themselves. Agreed practices may include one or more of the below:

- The child will leave their mobile phone at home with parents/carers

- The child will hand their phone in to the staff member, who will keep their phone securely in an appropriate pouch or office drawer, and will have it returned at the end of the day.
- In the case of post 16 pupils, the young person will be trusted to keep their mobile phone on their person but asked not to use it during designated lesson and activity times. (See below)
- Other personalised and bespoke agreements that reduce the child's anxiety levels enough for them to attend school without full access to their mobile phone.

Pupils will be taught the risks that are associated with the use of mobile phones, both in school and more broadly, to make sure 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 and other technology 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 its policy.

Smartwatches are wristwatches with smart technology in them. They can be used to tell the time, send and receive text and voice messages, make calls and listen to music. Some smartwatches have wellness and health-related features.

OPAL Independent School uses the same procedures as those for mobile phones during the school day. Each child will have a bespoke agreement in place for use for mobile phones, smart watches and any other technology in place. For example, a pupil may require some form of technology for communication in order to access an activity or school in general, which will be written into their personalised agreement.

5.2 Exceptions for special circumstances and for post 16 pupils

As mentioned previously, a blanket ban of mobile phones for all children and young people at OPAL Education Independent School may cause an increased safeguarding risks due to refusal to attend. For this reason, each child and young person will have an individualised agreement with regards to their mobile phone and technology use. It is our intention that almost all pupils **will not** have access to their mobile phones during the school day. However, there may be some circumstances where it is necessary for the child to have their phone with them. Such circumstances may include, but not be limited to:

- Young carers who need to be contactable
- Pupils with diabetes or other medical issues that mean they need to monitor their health
- Those pupils who are post 16.

In the case of permission 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 will speak to Paul Sperring or Lianne Willis and this will be written into the pupil's personalised mobile phone use agreement.

Any pupils who are given permission must then adhere to the rules for use, as outlined in their bespoke acceptable use agreement.

Post 16 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 or smart devices out of sight of younger pupils, and during break and lunch times. Misuse of mobile phones or other devices by pupils in post 16 will lead to sanctions according to our behaviour policy.

5.3 Sanctions

Whilst OPAL Education Independent School recognises that schools are permitted to confiscate phones from pupils under sections 91 and 94 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006), this is not our usual practice when our pupils do not adhere to their bespoke Mobile phone and technology agreement.

Should students not adhere to their personalised agreement, differing sanctions will be used, taking into account the specific circumstances for the mobile phone use, and the needs of the child or young person.

Sanctions imposed may include, but not be limited to:

- A tutor discussion with the child regarding their misuse
- A senior leader discussion with the child regarding their misuse
- A meeting with parents/carers and the child to discuss their misuse and revisit their agreement
- An amendment to their agreement
- A confiscation of phone by their parent/carer, if they feel able to do so safely.
- In extreme circumstances, and upon request from a parent/carer, a confiscation of phone by the Head Teacher for a designated length of time.

In each case, the sanction given will be reasonable and proportionate. The school will 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 whether pastoral support, an early intervention, or a referral to children's social care is appropriate

Staff at OPAL Education Independent School also know that they have the power to search pupils' phones in specific circumstances, as set out in the DfE's guidance on searching, screening and confiscation. This guidance allows staff 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 these circumstances, phones will only be searched if:

- The Head teacher or DSL has agreed that this should happen and is also in attendance
- Parents/carers or social workers have been contacted and are in agreement (Unless the issue of concern is related to them and to do so could put the child in danger)

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:

- Making of or sharing nudes and semi-nudes including images that are digitally altered or wholly generated using AI (such as 'deepfakes' or 'deep nudes')
- 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

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

Parents and carers 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, but must refer any proposed 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 bringing mobile phones to school must make sure that their phones are appropriately labelled, ready to be stored away securely when not in use during the school day.

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 or from school.

This statement will be placed on every pupil's bespoke mobile phone use agreement and be discussed with parents/carers when it is agreed.

Confiscated phones will be stored in a locked metal cabinet in the school office. They will be the responsibility of the Head teacher.

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

8. Monitoring and review

The school is committed to making sure 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 DfE, the local authority and any other relevant organisations

If there are any concerns regarding this policy, these should be brought to the attention of Lianne Willis, DSL, in a timely manner via email at lianne@opalindependentschool.co.uk



9. Appendix 1: Personalised Mobile Phone Agreement

OPAL Education Independent School aims to ensure that our school is a mobile free zone wherever possible. To this end, each pupil will sign an agreement.

(* Delete and amend as appropriate)

* I _____ agree to leave my phone at home each day. My parents/carers will contact school if they need to speak to me.

* I _____ will hand my phone to my tutor each day. They will store it in their _____ and give it me back when they drop me back at home.

I will ensure my phone is clearly labeled and ready to be stored away. I will also ensure that I secure my mobile phone as much as possible, using passwords or pin codes to protect access to my phone's functions.

* I _____ will be allowed to bring my phone to school each day because I am a post 16 pupil. I agree that I will follow the pupil acceptable use agreement, as outlined below:

* I _____ will be allowed to bring my phone to school each day because

I understand that I have to follow the rules within the acceptable use agreement, as outlined below.

I know that if I do not follow this personalised agreement, a meeting will be held, and the rules may be changed.

Signed _____ (Pupil) Date _____

Signed _____ (Parent/carer) Date _____

Signed _____ (School lead) Date _____

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Pupils must

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**Pupil acceptable use agreement for mobile phones, i-pad, smart watch etc
. (To be amended as appropriate to meet the child's needs)**

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

1. You may not use your mobile phone during the school day, including lesson times, in between lessons, breaktime and lunchtime, unless a teacher specifically allows you to for a specific reason.
2. Phones must be switched off (not just put on 'silent').
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.
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 or otherwise to act in breach of the school's behaviour policy. 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 a criminal offence. For instance, by making or sharing nudes or semi-nudes (including AI-generated images or 'deepfakes')
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 being declared invalid.

11. Appendix 2: 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 in the school building
- Please do not use phones where pupils are present. If you must use your phone, you may go to the school office or go off-site.
- Do not take photos or recordings of pupils (unless it is your own child), 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 on request or on the school website.



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