



Department
for Education

Statutory guidance

Mobile phones in schools

Updated 29 June 2026

Applies to England

Contents

About this guidance

Prohibiting the use of mobile phones in school

Implementing a policy on prohibiting the use of mobile phones

Communicating the policy to pupils and parents

The role of staff

Expectations for pupils

The role of parents

The use of sanctions

Searching pupils

Adaptations and reasonable adjustments

The use of mobile phones outside the school day

All schools should be mobile phone-free environments by default; anything other than this should be by exception only.

All schools must have a behaviour policy

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/behaviour-in-schools--2>) that is aligned with the school's legal duties and standards relating to the welfare of children. This is essential in establishing and maintaining high standards of behaviour ensuring that the school is a calm and safe environment for all pupils and staff. As part of this policy, schools should develop a mobile phone policy that prohibits the use of mobile phones and other smart technology with similar functionality to mobile phones (for example, the ability to send and/or receive notifications or messages via mobile phone networks or the ability to record audio and/or video) throughout the school day, including during lessons, the time between lessons, breaktimes and lunchtime.

Where schools have a Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) scheme to facilitate the use of laptops or tablets for learning, such devices should be used in accordance with the school's BYOD policy and Information and Communications Technology (ICT) acceptable use policy. BYOD policies should not include mobile phones.

Boarding schools and residential schools should prohibit the use of mobile phones throughout the teaching day. They should develop appropriate policies regarding the use of mobile phones during the rest of their pupils' time at school, which safeguards and promotes the welfare of the children in their care in accordance with the boarding schools: national minimum standards (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/boarding-schools-national-minimum-standards>) and residential special schools: national minimum standards (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/residential-special-schools-national-minimum-standards>). This includes facilitating arrangements so boarders can contact their parents and families in private, at a time that is suitable for both parties, considering relevant time zones for international pupils.

Schools should consider whether students in the sixth form should be permitted access to their mobile phone at certain and limited times and locations, reflecting this period of education as one of increased independence and responsibility, without compromising the school's policy on the use of mobile phones for other pupils. This should include prohibiting the use of mobile phones by sixth-form students in front of younger pupils, for example, limiting use to a sixth-form common room. Sixth-form students should remain subject to the school's behaviour policy and misuse of their phone should have the potential to lead to sanctions.

Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure appropriate filtering and monitoring systems are in place and regularly reviewed, in line with keeping children safe in education, to prevent access to harmful or inappropriate content.

Communicating the school behaviour policy, including the school's policy on prohibiting the use of mobile phones, to all members of the community is an important way of building and maintaining the school's culture and makes expectations transparent to all. School leaders should ensure that all staff, pupils and parents are familiar with the policy, how it is implemented and any sanctions for breaching it.

Schools should publish details of the school's policy on prohibiting the use of mobile phones.

The role of staff

All staff should consistently enforce the school's policy on the use of mobile phones.

Staff should not use their own mobile phone for personal reasons in front of pupils throughout the school day. This will empower staff to better challenge pupils to meet the school expectations and effectively enforce the prohibition of mobile phones throughout the school day. There may be occasions where it is appropriate for a teacher to use a mobile phone or similar device, for instance to issue homework, issue rewards and sanctions or use multi-factor authentication. Responsible bodies and school leaders should be clear with staff on their expectations around use of mobile phones during the day.

Expectations for pupils

All pupils should be clear on the school's policy on prohibiting the use of mobile phones and should be reminded of the policy, and the consequences and sanctions for not following it, at the start of each school year and again, where appropriate, at regular intervals.

Pupils should 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 being taken by their school 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.

DfE's guidance on [relationships and sex education \(RSE\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education) and health education (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education>) provides further information on how to ensure that pupils are safe online, including how their

deem proportionate. In considering whether a confiscation is a proportionate penalty, schools should consider what disciplinary outcome the confiscation is intended to achieve and whether there are other ways to achieve the same outcome, as well as the pupil's individual circumstances such as age and SEND, as explained in the behaviour in schools guidance. Confiscation as a sanction can be an effective deterrent for a specific pupil or a general deterrent for all pupils at the school.

Schools should consider whether the misbehaviour gives cause to suspect that a pupil is suffering, or may be at risk of, harm. Where this may be the case, as set out in part 1 of keeping children safe in education (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>), school staff should follow the school's child protection policy and speak to the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy). They will consider if pastoral support, an early intervention or a referral to children's social care is appropriate.

Searching pupils

Headteachers, or staff they authorise, have a statutory power to search a pupil or their possessions where they have reasonable grounds to suspect that the pupil is in possession of a prohibited item as set out in legislation^[footnote 1] or any item identified in the school rules as an item that may be searched for. Headteachers can and should identify mobile phones and similar devices as something that may be searched for in their school behaviour policy. Staff should refer to the searching, screening and confiscation in schools (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/searching-screening-and-confiscation>) guidance regarding searching a pupil.

Adaptations and reasonable adjustments

While schools are expected to prohibit the use of mobile phones throughout the school day to reduce distraction and disruption, they must comply with their other legal duties such as the duty to make reasonable adjustments where necessary. There may be other exceptional circumstances where schools should consider making adaptations to their policy for specific pupils. This guidance does not provide an exhaustive list of exceptional circumstances, and schools should assess each case on its own merits.

Schools have a duty under the Equality Act 2010 (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>) to take such steps as is reasonable to avoid substantial disadvantage to a disabled pupil caused by

Schools should remain vigilant to risks relating to online safety and should ensure that online safety is reflected in all appropriate school policies. Schools should ensure that pupils are able to access their mobile phone where necessary when raising concerns with teachers about issues which have occurred online. This is particularly important in residential settings. The communication of the details of the school's policy on the use of mobile phones in school can be a good opportunity to raise the issue of online safety with parents.

For further information, see the sections on online behaviour incidents in:

- behaviour in schools (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/behaviour-in-schools--2>)
- keeping children safe in education (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>)
- teaching online safety in schools (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teaching-online-safety-in-schools>)

-
1. A 'prohibited item' is defined in subsection (3) of section 550ZA of the Education Act 1996 (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/section/550ZA>) and includes articles specified in The Schools (Specification and Disposal of Articles) Regulations 2012. (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/951/made>)



OGL

All content is available under the [Open Government Licence v3.0](#), except where otherwise stated



© Crown copyright