Mobile Phone Policy

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*subject to any relevant changes in legislation or other appropriate guidelines

Contents

Statement of intent
1. Legal framework
2. Scope and definitions
3. Rationale and aims
4. Roles and responsibilities
5. Expectations for pupils
6. Bringing a mobile phone to school
7. Storage and collection
8. Breaches and sanctions
9. Searching and confiscation
10. Safeguarding and online safety
11. Reasonable adjustments and individual circumstances
12. Staff, visitors and volunteers
13. Communication with parents and carers
14. Teaching, prevention and curriculum
15. Monitoring, review and evaluation

Appendix A: Quick reference for pupils and parents
Appendix B: Related policies and guidance

Statement of intent

St Barnabas C of E Primary Academy is committed to providing a calm, safe and supportive environment in which every pupil can learn, participate and thrive. The school recognises that mobile phones and similar smart technology can provide useful communication outside school, but that access during the school day can distract from learning, contribute to disruption and create additional safeguarding and wellbeing risks.

In accordance with the Department for Education (DfE) statutory guidance Mobile phones in schools, St Barnabas is a mobile phone-free school by default. Pupils must not have access to, or use, mobile phones or similar personal interactive communication devices during the school day, including lessons, transitions, breaktimes and lunchtimes, except where an agreed individual exception or reasonable adjustment applies.

The school will implement this policy consistently, proportionately and inclusively. Expectations will be explicitly taught, modelled and reinforced, and staff will apply the policy alongside the school's Behaviour for Learning Policy, Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Online Safety Policy and Acceptable Use arrangements. The school will work in partnership with parents and carers so that pupils understand both the expectations and the reasons for them.

1. Legal framework

This policy has due regard to, and should be read alongside, the following legislation and statutory guidance current at September 2026:

- Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026, including section 36, which requires schools in England to have regard to Secretary of State guidance on pupils having and using mobile phones and other personal interactive communication devices during school hours and on school premises.
- Department for Education (DfE), Mobile phones in schools (updated 29 June 2026). This guidance became statutory on 29 June 2026 and schools were expected to begin following it from 1 September 2026.
- DfE, Behaviour in schools: advice for headteachers and school staff, including the requirement for clear, consistent and proportionate behaviour expectations and sanctions.
- DfE, Searching, screening and confiscation: guidance for schools (updated 19 July 2023).
- DfE, Keeping children safe in education 2026, in force from 1 September 2026, including safeguarding and online safety responsibilities.
- Equality Act 2010, including the duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils where required.
- UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018, where personal data, images, recordings or communications are involved.

This policy also supports the school's wider duties to safeguard and promote pupils' welfare and to maintain a calm, safe and supportive environment for teaching and learning. It is not intended to replace the school's Behaviour for Learning Policy, Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy or Online Safety Policy.

2. Scope and definitions

This policy applies to all pupils at St Barnabas C of E Primary Academy and covers the whole school day, from the start of the first school session until the end of the last school session. It applies on the school premises and, where relevant, during school-led activities, educational visits and residential activities.

For the purposes of this policy, “mobile phone” includes smartphones and basic mobile phones. “Similar smart technology” includes personal devices with similar communication, recording or notification functionality, such as smart watches or other wearable devices capable of sending/receiving messages, accessing mobile networks, recording audio/video or displaying notifications.

School-owned technology used for learning is not covered by the prohibition where it is authorised by the school and used under the relevant ICT/acceptable use arrangements.

3. Rationale and aims

The policy aims to:

- protect learning time and reduce distraction and classroom disruption;
- promote positive relationships, respectful behaviour and a calm school culture;
- reduce opportunities for cyberbullying, recording, photographing or sharing content without consent;
- support pupils’ wellbeing by creating periods of school time that are free from personal digital notifications and social communication;
- protect privacy and support safeguarding, including where devices may be used to facilitate harmful or inappropriate communication;
- help pupils develop healthy, responsible and age-appropriate habits around technology;
- ensure that parents and carers have a clear and reliable route for contacting pupils during the school day through the school office; and
- provide reasonable adjustments and carefully controlled exceptions where necessary to meet individual needs.

The DfE states that pupils should be taught the risks associated with mobile phone use and the benefits of a mobile phone-free environment. St Barnabas will therefore explain the purpose of the policy rather than relying solely on sanctions.

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1 The Executive Headteacher

- ensures that the policy is implemented consistently and remains aligned with statutory guidance;
- ensures that staff understand their responsibilities and have appropriate support to enforce the policy;
- authorises or oversees exceptional arrangements and reasonable adjustments where required;
- ensures that sanctions and confiscation are proportionate and take account of relevant individual circumstances;
- reports significant patterns or issues to the appropriate governance arrangements;
- reviews the policy following significant incidents, relevant legal or guidance changes, and as part of the annual policy cycle.

4.2 The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

- advises on safeguarding concerns involving mobile phones or personal devices;
- ensures concerns involving bullying, harmful online behaviour, sexual harassment or exploitation are managed under safeguarding procedures;
- works with relevant staff to identify patterns or emerging risks;
- supports staff in responding to concerns where a device may contain harmful or safeguarding-related material;
- liaises with external agencies where appropriate.

4.3 All staff

- model appropriate personal device use and do not use personal mobile phones for personal reasons in front of pupils during the school day, except where authorised or necessary for an appropriate school purpose;
- apply the pupil expectations consistently and calmly;

- report concerns and repeated breaches in line with the Behaviour for Learning and Safeguarding and Child Protection Policies;
- do not access or search a pupil's device beyond the powers and procedures set out in law and the school's searching and confiscation arrangements.

4.4 Pupils

- follow this policy and any reasonable adjustments or individual arrangements agreed for them;
- hand devices to the school office when required;
- do not use, display, access, record, photograph, message or otherwise operate personal mobile phones or similar devices during the school day;
- seek help from a trusted adult if they are worried about a device, online contact or digital content.

4.5 Parents and carers

- support the school's mobile phone-free expectations;
- ensure the school knows about any agreed individual arrangements or relevant medical/accessibility needs;
- contact the school office rather than contacting their child directly on a mobile phone during the school day, except where the school has agreed otherwise;
- work with the school if a device is repeatedly brought into school contrary to the policy.

5. Expectations for pupils

Pupils are expected to understand and follow the simple rule: personal mobile phones and similar smart devices are not available to pupils during the school day.

Expected	Not permitted
If a phone is brought to school, it is switched off and handed to the class teacher on arrival.	Using a mobile phone or smart device in lessons, corridors, toilets, playgrounds, dining areas, assemblies or other school activities.
Pupils collect their device only at the agreed end-of-day time.	Checking notifications, messages, social media, games, cameras, recordings or other functions.
Pupils use school-approved devices only when directed by staff for learning.	Taking photographs, videos or audio recordings of pupils, staff or visitors on personal devices.
Pupils speak to an adult if they need help or need to contact home.	Using a personal device to bully, threaten, embarrass, harass or share content about another person.

6. Bringing a mobile phone to school

As a primary school, St Barnabas expects pupils not to bring mobile phones to school unless there is a genuine reason connected with their journey to and from school or an agreed individual need. Where a pupil does bring a mobile phone, the following procedure applies:

- the device must be switched off before entering the school building or grounds;
- the pupil hands the device to the class teacher at the start of the school day;
- the school stores the device securely during the school day;
- the device is returned at the end of the school day in accordance with the school's collection procedure;
- the pupil must not access the device before it has been formally returned to them.

The school is not responsible for personal devices that are brought onto the premises in breach of this policy, although staff will take reasonable care of devices once they have been formally handed in and securely stored by the school.

7. Storage and collection

The class teacher will maintain a clear, consistent process for receiving, storing and returning devices. The process will be designed to minimise disruption and avoid drawing unnecessary attention to individual pupils.

Where appropriate, the school may use a labelled storage system or other secure arrangement. Devices should remain switched off. Pupils will not have access to stored devices during the school day unless an exception has been agreed by the school.

Where a pupil is collected from school before the end of the normal school day, the device remains subject to the policy and will only be released in accordance with the school's agreed procedure.

8. Breaches and sanctions

A breach of this policy is a breach of the school's behaviour expectations and will be managed through the Behaviour for Learning Policy. The school will use a clear, predictable and proportionate response.

Situation	Possible response
Device is brought to school but handed in as required.	No sanction: the pupil has followed the procedure.
Device is seen, used, heard or accessed during the school day.	Device is confiscated in accordance with the school's procedures and returned at an appropriate time; the incident is recorded where required.
Repeated or deliberate breaches.	Escalated response in line with the Behaviour for Learning Policy, which may include parent/carer contact, loss of privileges or other proportionate sanctions.
Device is used to cause harm, bully, threaten, record without consent or facilitate another safeguarding concern.	Behaviour and safeguarding procedures are followed. The DSL is informed where appropriate and further action is considered according to the circumstances.

Sanctions will be proportionate and will take account of age, development, SEND, disability, medical needs and other relevant individual circumstances. The DfE confirms that schools may confiscate mobile phones as a disciplinary penalty where their policy is clearly breached, subject to lawful and proportionate practice.

9. Searching and confiscation

The school will use its powers to search and confiscate only in accordance with the law, the DfE Searching, screening and confiscation guidance, and the school's Behaviour for Learning Policy.

Mobile phones and similar devices may be identified within the school behaviour policy as items for which a pupil may be searched where there are reasonable grounds to suspect that the pupil has an item that the school rules permit staff to search for. Searches will be carried out by authorised staff in accordance with the relevant statutory guidance and school procedures.

Staff will not routinely inspect the contents of a pupil's phone simply because it has been confiscated. Where there is a safeguarding concern, suspected offence or other serious concern involving information stored on a device, the matter will be referred to the DSL and/or appropriate senior leader and managed in accordance with safeguarding and searching procedures.

Where a device may contain evidence of an offence or serious safeguarding concern, staff will avoid unnecessary access to the content and seek appropriate advice, including from the police or other relevant agencies where necessary.

10. Safeguarding and online safety

Mobile phone misuse can be connected to safeguarding concerns including cyberbullying, harmful online behaviour, child-on-child abuse, sexual harassment, sharing of images without consent, grooming, exploitation and threats. The school will respond to such concerns under the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Online Safety Policy.

- Any disclosure or concern is reported to the DSL or deputy DSL without delay.
- Staff will not promise confidentiality and will share information where necessary to safeguard a child.
- Concerns and actions will be recorded in line with the school's safeguarding recording arrangements.
- Where appropriate, the school will work with parents/carers, children's social care, the police and other agencies.
- The school will avoid unnecessarily criminalising pupils and will consider age, development, context and safeguarding needs when deciding the appropriate response.

The school's existing Online Safety Policy identifies personal mobile phones as personal smart devices and states that pupils are not permitted to use them in school; this policy provides the more detailed, standalone expectations and procedures for mobile phones.

11. Reasonable adjustments and individual circumstances

The school will apply the policy inclusively and will comply with its legal duties, including the duty to make reasonable adjustments where required. A pupil may need access to a personal device in exceptional circumstances, for example because of a disability, medical condition, communication need or other identified safeguarding or accessibility requirement.

Any exception should be agreed in advance by the school and recorded in an appropriate individual plan or agreed arrangement. The arrangement will specify when, where and how the device may be used and who is responsible for supervising or supporting its use. The school will consider whether an alternative school-provided arrangement can meet the need while maintaining the mobile phone-free environment.

SEND, medical or other individual circumstances will be considered before sanctions are applied. The SENCO, DSL, parents/carers and relevant staff will be involved where appropriate.

12. Staff, visitors and volunteers

DfE guidance expects staff to model appropriate behaviour and not use their own mobile phones for personal reasons in front of pupils throughout the school day. St Barnabas staff should therefore keep personal mobile phones out of sight and use them only in designated non-contact times and appropriate areas, except where an authorised school purpose, emergency or agreed individual circumstance applies.

- Staff must not use personal devices to photograph, video or audio-record pupils or their learning.
- School-approved devices should be used for school purposes wherever possible.
- Staff must follow the Trust/school ICT Acceptable Use Agreement and Staff Code of Conduct.
- Visitors and volunteers should follow the school's expectations and any instructions given by staff regarding personal device use.
- Any concern about inappropriate use of a device by an adult in school must be reported through the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and, where relevant, low-level concerns procedures.

13. Communication with parents and carers

The school will publish this policy and explain the arrangements clearly to parents and carers. The school will communicate the reasons for the policy, the arrangements for bringing in and storing phones, the consequences of breaches, and how parents can contact their child during the school day.

Parents and carers who need to contact a pupil during the school day should contact the school office. The school will relay urgent messages or facilitate contact where appropriate. This provides a reliable route for communication without requiring pupils to have access to personal devices.

The school will remind pupils and families of the policy at the beginning of each academic year and as needed. Where repeated difficulties occur, the school will work directly with the family to reinforce expectations and identify any underlying needs.

14. Teaching, prevention and curriculum

In keeping with DfE guidance and the school's existing Online Safety Policy, pupils will be taught age-appropriate knowledge and behaviours that help them use technology safely, responsibly and confidently.

- why mobile phone-free school time supports attention, learning and positive relationships;
- how notifications and digital communication can interrupt concentration;
- how to recognise and report cyberbullying, harmful content and unsafe contact;
- privacy, consent and responsible sharing of images and information;
- how to seek help when something online makes them worried, uncomfortable or unsafe;
- healthy and respectful technology habits, including balancing online and offline activities.

Teaching will be appropriate to pupils' age and developmental stage. Where pupils have SEND or other additional needs, the school will adapt teaching and support so that they can understand and participate successfully. This is consistent with EEF guidance emphasising positive, supportive environments, active engagement and inclusive practice.

15. Monitoring, review and evaluation

The school will monitor the implementation and impact of this policy through routine behaviour and safeguarding processes. Monitoring will consider consistency, repeated breaches, safeguarding concerns, parent/pupil feedback and any emerging technology or risks.

- Senior leaders will review patterns of incidents and identify whether further teaching, communication or staff development is needed.
- The DSL will review any safeguarding themes arising from mobile phone or personal device use.
- The school will review the effectiveness of the storage and collection arrangements and make practical improvements where required.
- Pupil and parent feedback may be gathered where appropriate, particularly when reviewing implementation.
- The policy will be reviewed annually and sooner where there are changes to legislation, statutory guidance, school arrangements or significant incidents.

The school will aim for a consistent approach in which expectations are explicitly taught, routinely reinforced and calmly implemented. This reflects the importance of explicitly teaching and revisiting behavioural routines and of creating positive, supportive environments.

Appendix A: Quick reference for pupils and parents

St Barnabas mobile phone rule	What this means
No access during the school day	Phones and similar personal smart devices are not used or accessed during lessons, transitions, break or lunchtime.
If a phone comes to school	Switch it off and hand it to the class teacher when you arrive.
Need to contact home?	Speak to a member of staff or contact the school office.
Need an exception?	Talk to the school in advance so an individual arrangement can be considered.
Phone used against the policy	It may be confiscated and managed through the Behaviour for Learning Policy.
Worried about something online?	Tell a trusted adult. Safeguarding concerns are taken seriously and reported to the DSL.

Appendix B: Related policies and guidance

- St Barnabas Behaviour for Learning Policy 2026–27.
- St Barnabas Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy 2026–27.
- St Barnabas Online Safety Policy 2026–27.
- St Barnabas ICT/Technology Acceptable Use Agreement.
- St Barnabas Anti-bullying Policy.
- DfE: Mobile phones in schools (statutory guidance, updated 29 June 2026).
- DfE: Keeping children safe in education 2026.
- DfE: Searching, screening and confiscation (updated 19 July 2023).
- DfE: Behaviour in schools.
- Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026.
- Education Endowment Foundation (EEF): Improving Behaviour in Schools and guidance on inclusive teaching/SEND.

Key external sources checked

- DfE, Mobile phones in schools – statutory guidance, updated 29 June 2026.
- DfE, Keeping children safe in education 2026 – in force from 1 September 2026.
- DfE, Searching, screening and confiscation – updated 19 July 2023.
- DfE, Behaviour in schools and related behaviour resources.
- Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026, section 36.

- Education Endowment Foundation: Improving Behaviour in Schools; Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools; Guide to Inclusive Teaching (2026).