



# Mobile Phone Policy

Ian Mikardo High School

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## 1. Introduction and Aims

At Ian Mikardo High School, we recognise that mobile phones, including smart phones, are an important part of everyday life for our students, parents/carers, and staff, as well as the wider school community.

We also recognise that mobile phones risk unnecessary distraction, disruption and diversion which is very difficult for our students to resist, which can result in lost learning and limit their social engagement and interaction. Both as a society and as a school community, we are increasingly aware that use of mobile phones among young people, is not only detrimental to learning, but also distracts and disrupts lessons for the whole class, and often diverts teachers' efforts away from learning.

We owe it to our children to do what we can to remove distractions and enable them to be fully present and engaged in the classroom.

We also owe it to our students to keep them safe at school.

The prevalence of social media platforms and live streaming communications has increased significantly in recent years, posing potential risks to our students' safety and well-being.

Research has shown that excessive use of social media can have detrimental effects on mental health, including increased feelings of loneliness, anxiety, and depression (Twenge & Campbell, 2018).

Additionally, the constant availability of live streaming features on various apps raises concerns about privacy and the potential for online predators to exploit vulnerable individuals whilst at school.

Furthermore, there is growing evidence to suggest that excessive mobile phone use can negatively impact attention and memory in students.

Studies have found that heavy use of mobile phones is associated with decreased cognitive performance, including difficulties in focusing attention and retaining information (Lepp et al., 2015). Additionally, the developing brain of adolescents may be particularly vulnerable to the negative effects of excessive screen time, as it can disrupt normal brain development and lead to long-term cognitive deficits (Hutton et al., 2020), with an amplification of this impact being realised for students with EHCP's identifying SEMH as the primary need.

Despite these challenges, we want to emphasise the positive benefits of limited mobile phone use for our students.

Research has shown that establishing clear boundaries around mobile phone usage can lead to improved academic performance, better sleep quality, and enhanced social interactions (Vernon et al., 2019).

By promoting a mobile-free environment during school hours, we aim to create a space where students can fully engage with their learning and develop healthy habits for managing technology use in their daily lives, aiming to reduce distractions and foster a culture of engagement and communication among students.

By removing mobile phones from the school day, we can create a safe space where students are protected from the risks and dangers associated with social media and cyber-bullying, as well as the peer pressure and possible stigma associated with owning what are often expensive devices.

**Our policy aims to:**

- Promote, and set an example for, safe and responsible phone use.
- Set clear guidelines for the use of mobile phones for students, staff, parents/carers 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
- Potential for lesson disruption
- Risk of theft, loss, or damage
- Appropriate use of technology in the classroom

## **2. Roles and Responsibilities**

### **2.1 Staff**

All staff (including teachers, support staff and supply staff) are responsible for enforcing this policy.

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 Head Teacher is responsible for monitoring the policy, reviewing it annually, and holding staff and students accountable for its implementation.

### **2.2 Governors**

The role of governors in supporting the review of a school mobile phone policy is crucial in ensuring that the policy remains robust, effective, and compliant with relevant regulations and guidelines. Governors play a vital role in overseeing the safeguarding measures within the school, including those related to mobile phone use, by providing strategic guidance and oversight during the policy review process and ratifying as part of the policy review schedule.

## **3. Use of Mobile Phones by Staff**

### **3.1 Personal Mobile Phones**

Staff (including volunteers, contractors, and anyone else otherwise engaged by the school) are not permitted to make or receive calls, or send texts, while children are present or during contact time. Use of personal mobile phones must be restricted to non-contact time, and to areas of the school where students are not present (such as the staffroom or office areas).

There may be circumstances in which it's appropriate for a member of staff to have use of their phone during contact time. For instance:

- 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 use the school office number 0208 981 2413 as a point of emergency contact.

### **3.2 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 Bard).

Further information can be accessed through the school's 'E-Safety' Policy and the Data Protection, Security and social media Policy.

### **3.3 Safeguarding**

Staff must refrain from giving their personal contact details to parents/carers or students, including connecting through social media and messaging apps.

Staff must avoid publicising their contact details on any social media platform or website, to avoid unwanted contact by parents/carers or students and online conduct must comply with the afore mentioned "E-Safety" and Data Protection, Security and Social Media Policies.

Staff must not use their mobile phones to take photographs or recordings of students, their work, or anything else which could identify a student, unless doing so through use of the 'Earwig' application. If it's necessary to take photos or recordings as part of a lesson/school trip/activity, this must be done using school equipment where available. Only in the occasions that school provided equipment is not accessible can a member of staff use their personal device, and this can only be done using the 'Earwig' application which ensures that any data captured is not stored locally.

### **3.4 Using Personal Mobiles for Work Purposes**

In some circumstances, it may be appropriate for staff to use personal mobile phones for work. Such circumstances may include, but aren't limited to:

- Emergency evacuations
- Supervising off-site trips
- Supervising residential visits

Use of a personal device should be considered in the context of the 'Offsite Trips' procedures guidelines.

Staff members supervising offsite learning or residential activities will usually be provided with a school issued mobile phone, however circumstances may arise whilst conducting a trip that necessitate the need to use a personal device and the primary consideration should always be the care and safeguarding of our students.

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 students, their work, or anything else which could identify a student – (unless through the 'Earwig' Application).
- Refrain (unless necessary) from using their phones to contact parents/carers. If necessary, contact must be made via the school office.

### **3.5 Work Phones**

Some members of staff are provided with a mobile phone by the school for work purposes.

Only authorised staff are permitted to use school phones, and access to the phone must not be provided to anyone without authorisation.

#### **Staff must:**

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

### **3.6 Sanctions**

Staff that fail to adhere to this policy may face disciplinary action.

See the school's staff disciplinary policy for more information.

## **4. Use of Mobile Phones by Students**

The purpose of this protocol is to ensure a mobile-free learning environment and promote a focused and productive school day.

1. Upon arrival at school, students are required to hand in their mobile phones to a designated member of greetings staff.

#### **2. Procedure:**

##### **Arrival at School:**

- As students enter the school premises, they will be greeted by a member of greetings staff stationed at the designated mobile phone hand-in area.
- Students will be reminded to switch off their mobile phones and hand them in for safekeeping during the school day.

##### **b. Mobile Phone Collection:**

- The greetings staff member will provide each student with a labelled container slot to store their mobile phone.
- Students will be asked to place their mobile phones in the provided container area, hand it over to the care staff member.
- The staff member will ensure that each mobile phone is securely stored in a locked safe box.

##### **c. Record Keeping:**

- The staff member will maintain a log or record of all mobile phones handed in, including the student's name and class.

- Any additional items accompanying the mobile phone, such as headphones or chargers, must also be handed to the staff member, and these items will be securely stored for safekeeping and recorded by the staff member.

### **3. Retrieval of Mobile Phones:**

End of School Day:

- At the conclusion of the school day, students will wait at the designated mobile phone retrieval area in the school foyer.
- A staff member will verify the identity of each student and retrieve their mobile phone from the safe box.

b. Return of Mobile Phones:

- Students will receive their mobile phone from a member of the staff team, checked by an accompanying colleague.
- The staff member will also return any accompanying electronic items to the student.

### **4. Exceptions:**

In cases of emergency or urgent communication needs, students may be granted temporary access to their mobile phones under the supervision of school staff.

- Parents/guardians are encouraged to contact the school directly if there is a need for immediate communication with their child during school hours.

### **5. Application of the School Policy:**

- Compliance with this protocol is mandatory for all students and failure to adhere to the policy will result with consequences being applied including working offsite, working online or possible exclusion from school.
- If students refuse to hand over their mobile phones, we may require the parent/carer to support the school by attending the school to collect the phone.
- Persistent contravention of this policy will require a meeting with the student's parent/carer

#### **4.1 Sanctions**

It is hoped that the policy is embraced by all members of the school community in the spirit of child protection, safeguarding and well-being intended, however, we understand that for some, compliance with the school requirements will be difficult and present as an issue.

As a first recourse, we will seek to work with our students and families to support understanding and work towards acceptance of the school policy.

In the circumstance that a student persistently refuses to comply with the policy the following actions will be applied:

1. The student's parent/carer will be contacted and asked to support school staff with the objective of receiving the phone voluntarily.
2. The student may be required to work offsite for a period of time, supported by a member of staff, working towards compliance with the school policy.
3. The student's parent or carer may be asked to attend the school to take the device(s) from their child.
4. If the issue become persistent, this may result in a period of time working and being educated 'offsite', supported by a member of staff.
5. A meeting to resolve the issue will be arranged with the student's parent/carer before re-integrating the student back into the school community.
6. Should the issue remain unresolved, further actions will be considered in consultation with parents/carers and relevant external professionals.

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:

- Sexting (consensual and non-consensual sharing nude or semi-nude images or videos)
- 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.

## **5. Use of Mobile Phones by Parents/Carers, Volunteers and Visitors**

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 students, unless it's a public event (such as a school concert), or of their own child and with permission.
- Using any photographs or recordings for personal use only, and not posting on social media without consent
- Not using phones in lessons, or when working with students

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 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 his/her personal mobile during the school day.



## 6. Loss, Theft or Damage

Students bringing phones to school will have them stored securely and appropriately labelled.

Students must hand their phones in for safe storage as soon as they enter the school building, to a member of our 'greetings' team.

If a student arrives late to school, they must hand their phone to a member of the school administration staff who will secure it safely in a locked storage container.

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 students are travelling to and from school.

The school accepts no responsibility for loss, damage or theft of phones in the circumstance that a student has not complied with the school policy and procedures.

Instances in which a mobile phone become damaged, stolen or lost whilst in the care of the school, will be considered on an individual basis.

Confiscated phones will be stored in the school office in a secure locked cabinet and all due care and attention will be taken to ensure their safe storage and safety.

Lost phones should be returned to a school administrator in the school Office. The school will then attempt to contact the owner.

## 7. Monitoring and Review

The school is committed to ensuring that this policy has a positive impact of students' education, behaviour and welfare. When reviewing the policy, the school will take into account:

- Feedback from parents/carers and students
- Feedback from teachers
- Records of behaviour and safeguarding incidents
- Relevant advice from the Department for Education, the local authority or other relevant organisations

As stated above, Governors will support the school by reviewing the mobile phone policy ensuring that the policy remains robust, effective, and compliant with relevant regulations and guidelines.

Governors play a vital role in overseeing the safeguarding measures within the school, including those related to mobile phone use, by providing strategic guidance and oversight during the policy review process and ratifying as part of the policy review schedule.

## 8. Review Appendix 1: Code of Conduct/Acceptable Use Agreement for Students

You must comply with the following directions if you bring your mobile phone to school:

1. You may not use your mobile phone during lessons, or during the school day unless a teacher specifically allows you to.
2. You must hand your mobile phone to the greetings member of staff when you arrive to school in the morning.
3. If you are late to school, you must hand the phone to an office member of staff upon arrival.
4. You may not use your mobile phone in the toilets or changing rooms. This is to protect the privacy and welfare of other students.
5. You cannot take photos or recordings (either video or audio) of school staff or other students without their consent.
6. Avoid sharing your contact details with people you don't know, and don't share other people's contact details without their consent.
7. Don't share your phone's passwords or access codes with anyone else.
8. Don't use your mobile phone to bully, intimidate or harass anyone. This includes bullying, harassing or intimidating students or staff via:
  - a. Email
  - b. Text/messaging app
  - c. Social media
9. Don't use your phone to send or receive anything that may be criminal. For instance, by 'sexting'.
10. Rules on bullying, harassment, and intimidation apply to how you use your mobile phone even when you aren't in school.
11. 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.
12. Don't use your phone to view or share pornography or other harmful content.
13. You must comply with a request by a member of staff to hand over your phone. Refusal to comply is a breach of the school's behaviour and Mobile Phone Policy and will be dealt with accordingly.
14. 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 these appropriately, or turn them 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.

Compliance with this protocol is mandatory for all students (excluding Sixth Form Students) and failure to adhere to the policy will result with consequences being applied that may include reflective time working offsite, working online or possible exclusion from school.

15. Refuse to hand over your mobile phone may require your parent/carer to attend the school to collect the phone.
16. Persistent contravention of this policy will require a meeting with the student's parent/carer during which further consequences will be decided.

I understand the directions as outlined above and am aware of the consequences should I not comply with them.

Student Name (Printed)..... Signed.....

Date:.....

## 9. Appendix 2: Code of Conduct/Acceptable Use Agreement for Staff and Volunteers

Any mobile phones brought into school remain the responsibility of the individual owner. The school accepts no responsibility for the loss, theft or damage of personally owned mobile phones.

### Use of Mobile phone directions:

1. Mobile phones must not be used during working hours for private or personal use during lessons or formal school time. They should be switched off (or set to silent) at all times.
2. Use of mobile phones by staff during working hours for social networking activity (other than in accordance with curriculum use) is strictly prohibited.
3. Mobile phones are not permitted to be used in certain designated areas within the school premises such as changing rooms and toilets.
4. Staff members are not permitted to use their own mobile phones for contacting students or their families in a professional capacity (either on or off duty) other than in an emergency. In this contingency, staff should (wherever practicable) be issued with a school phone for this specific purpose and such usage (regardless of whether a personal mobile or a school mobile has been used) should be reported to a senior member of school staff as soon as possible.
5. Staff should never give their personal mobile phone number to students, nor should they store students' telephone numbers on their personal mobile phone, as this facilitates the possibility of inappropriate contact from students and parents.
6. Staff should never send to (or accept from) colleagues or students any texts or images that could be perceived as inappropriate or offensive.

### Use of personal mobile phones during the working day

1. The use of mobile phones by employees for the purpose of making or receiving personal calls and/or texts during the working day is discouraged for the following reasons:
  - it does not set a professional and positive example to students and parents.
  - it is disruptive and interrupts lessons.
  - it is often discourteous to colleagues (e.g. during meetings)
  - it is a misuse of the school's time and has potential to impact adversely on the students' learning.
2. In certain circumstances certified trade union representatives and staff who are carers may need to be given express permission to make or receive such calls.
3. Any personal calls should routinely be directed to the school's landline number so that a message can be relayed to the member of staff when he or she is available, other than in the case of emergency where the message must be relayed to the employee immediately.
4. Mobile phones should be switched off (or set to silent) whilst on school premises, other than during an official break or at lunchtime. Employees using personal mobile phones during their breaks should be respectful of their colleagues and mobile phones should not be used in front of students.
5. If an employee needs to use a mobile phone in the exercise of their professional duties, they are required to be discreet and go to an area not accessed by students, such as an office, the staff room or an unoccupied classroom.

I understand the directions as outlined above and agree to adhere to them.

Staff Name (Printed)..... Signed.....

Date.....

## 10. Appendix 3: Template Mobile Phone Information for Visitors

### Use of mobile phones in our school

- Please keep your mobile phone on silent/vibrate while on the school grounds.
- Please do not use phones where students are present. If you must use your phone, you must go to an area not accessed by students, such as an office, the staff room or an unoccupied classroom under the advice and guidance of a member of staff. We request that you exercise discretion when using your phone.
- Do not take photos or recordings of students (unless it is your own child), or staff and with permission.
- Do not use your phone in lessons, or when working with students.

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 from the school office.

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