



Cornerstone Academy Trust

Mobile Phones and Smart Devices Policy

Trust-wide policy for all pupils and adults working for or on behalf of the Trust, and the wider school community and visitors

Policy owner	Executive Headteacher, Designated Safeguarding Lead and Trust IT Lead
Approval body	Full Trust Board
Updated	October 2026
Review cycle	Annual, or earlier following a change in law or guidance
Next review	Autumn Term 2027 or earlier if legislation, statutory guidance or technology materially changes
Applies to	All schools and operations of Cornerstone Academy Trust

1. Purpose and principles

Mobile phones and smart devices are part of everyday life and may support pupils' safety and independence when travelling to and from school. During the school day, however, unrestricted access can distract from learning, affect behaviour and wellbeing, create safeguarding and privacy risks, and make it harder to maintain a calm and safe environment.

All Trust schools are mobile phone-free environments by default. Pupils may bring a phone to school where families consider this necessary, but they must not access or use it anywhere on the school site during the school day unless an individual exception has been authorised. This expectation covers lessons, transitions, breaktimes, lunchtimes and school-run activities, subject to the residential arrangements in section 10.

This policy aims to:

- protect learning, attention, wellbeing and positive behaviour;
- reduce safeguarding, privacy, cyberbullying and data-protection risks;
- set clear and consistent expectations for pupils, staff, parents and visitors;
- provide a fair process for exceptions, breaches, confiscation and review; and
- support the Trust's behaviour, safeguarding, online safety, data protection, acceptable use and educational visits arrangements.

2. Scope and definitions

For this policy, "mobile phone" includes smartphones and any personal device with similar communication, notification, internet, audio, image or video-recording functionality. This includes smartwatches, connected wearables and other smart technology selected by the Trust as falling within the policy.

"School day" means the period in which a pupil is under the school's authority on the school site, including lessons, transitions, breaktimes and lunchtimes. Before- and after-school provision and off-site activities are covered where stated in this policy or the relevant activity arrangements.

3. Legal and guidance framework

This policy has been written with regard to the Department for Education's statutory guidance, Mobile phones in schools, which became statutory on 29 June 2026 and should be followed by schools from 1 September 2026. It should be read alongside current guidance on behaviour, safeguarding, searching, screening and confiscation, and the Trust's related policies.

DfE: Mobile phones in schools: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mobile-phones-in-schools/mobile-phones-in-schools>

DfE: Behaviour in schools: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/behaviour-in-schools--2>

DfE: Keeping children safe in education: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

DfE: Searching, screening and confiscation: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/searching-screening-and-confiscation>

Nothing in this policy removes the school's duty to consider equality, disability, medical, safeguarding and other individual needs, or to make reasonable adjustments where required.

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1 Trust and school leaders

- ensure this policy is communicated, implemented and reviewed consistently;
- decide and record authorised exceptions or delegate this responsibility to an appropriate leader;
- ensure secure collection, storage and return arrangements are in place;

- ensure breaches are addressed consistently and proportionately through the behaviour policy; and
- monitor the impact of the policy on education, behaviour, safeguarding and welfare.

4.2 Staff

- model the expectations in this policy;
- apply collection, storage, use and breach procedures consistently;
- report safeguarding, data-protection or online safety concerns immediately through the appropriate Trust procedure; and
- respond promptly and professionally to reasonable questions from pupils and parents.

4.3 Pupils

- hand in phones and restricted smart devices when required;
- not access, use, display, hear or charge a device during the school day unless authorised;
- follow staff instructions, including an instruction to switch off or hand over a device; and
- use any device permitted on a residential, or through an individual exception, safely and responsibly.

4.4 Parents and carers

- support the school's phone-free expectations and discuss them with their child;
- use the school office rather than contacting their child directly during the school day;
- ensure any phone brought to school is clearly identifiable and appropriately protected; and
- recognise that bringing a device to school is voluntary and subject to the loss, damage and liability arrangements in section 12.

5. Staff personal mobile phones

Staff may bring personal phones to work, but these must be switched off or silent, kept securely out of sight and not carried or used in areas accessed by pupils. Personal use is restricted to non-contact time in staff-only areas or off site.

Personal devices must not be used to photograph, film or record pupils, their work or any information that could identify a pupil, whether on the school site or during trips and residential. School equipment must be used for authorised images or recordings.

Staff must not use personal devices to process, store or transmit confidential Trust information or personal data, including entering such information into generative AI services. Staff must not give personal contact details to pupils or use personal numbers, personal messaging accounts or personal social-media accounts to communicate with pupils or parents.

A headteacher may authorise a time-limited exception for an urgent personal circumstance, medical need, accessibility requirement, multi-factor authentication, emergency response or another justified operational need. The agreed location, purpose and duration should be clear. Where practical, Trust equipment should be used instead.

A failure by a staff member to follow this policy may be addressed under the staff code of conduct or disciplinary procedures.

6. Trust-issued mobile phones and Teams telephony

Authorised staff, including leaders and the maintenance team, may use Trust-issued mobile phones for legitimate work purposes on and off site, including in areas where pupils are present. Devices must be used professionally, secured against unauthorised access and managed in accordance with the Trust's acceptable

use, data protection, safeguarding and information security requirements. Access or compliance checks may be undertaken in accordance with those policies.

Where an external call is required, staff should use Teams on a Trust device or an authorised Trust-issued phone. Trust-issued equipment must not be lent to or used by an unauthorised person.

7. Pupil phones during the school day

Pupils may bring a personal mobile phone to school where their family considers this necessary for the journey to and from school or to support developing independence. Bringing a phone does not create an entitlement to use or access it during the school day.

1. On arrival, the pupil must switch the phone fully off and hand it directly to the class teacher or designated member of staff.
2. The phone will be placed in the school's designated secure storage arrangement. Schools must use a system that reduces the risk of devices being mixed up or returned to the wrong pupil.
3. The phone will remain inaccessible to the pupil throughout the school day unless an authorised exception applies.
4. At the end of the day, the phone will be returned directly to the pupil using the school's agreed checking process.

If a pupil needs to contact home during the day, this will be arranged through the school office. Parents must contact the school office if they need an urgent message passed to their child.

8. Smartwatches and wearable devices

Smartwatches and wearables are subject to the same expectations as mobile phones. A device may be worn only where it can be placed in a restricted mode that functions as an ordinary watch and prevents communication, notifications, internet access and recording. The pupil must use that mode throughout the school day.

If these functions cannot be disabled, or if the restricted mode is not used as required, the device must be handed in and stored with pupil phones. Devices used for an agreed medical, disability or accessibility purpose are considered under section 9.

9. Individual exceptions and reasonable adjustments

Exceptions must be limited, necessary and considered case by case. They may include a pupil who requires a device for a medical or disability-related purpose, a young carer or pupil with a significant safeguarding or home circumstance, or another individually assessed need.

A parent or carer should request an exception from the headteacher or delegated leader. The school will record:

- the reason and evidence considered;
- the permitted device, functions, locations and times;
- how privacy, safeguarding and disruption risks will be managed;
- the start and review dates; and
- the consequences of misuse and the circumstances in which permission may be withdrawn.

Where appropriate, the pupil and parent will sign the agreement in Appendix A. An urgent short-term exception may be agreed verbally and recorded as soon as practicable.

10. Educational visits and residentials

10.1 Day visits

Pupils must not take personal mobile phones on day visits unless the visit leader has approved an individual exception. The school will provide appropriate communication and authorised photography arrangements.

10.2 Residential visits of one night or longer

Pupils may take a mobile phone where this is permitted in the written arrangements for the residential. The visit leader may decide that phones are not suitable for a particular visit and will communicate this to families in advance.

5. Phones will be collected at the start of the school day using the normal procedure and initially held by staff.
6. The visit leader will identify appropriate periods and locations in which phones may be returned and used. At all other times, pupils must keep them switched off and stored as directed, or return them to staff storage.
7. Staff will state clearly when photography or recording is allowed. Pupils must not photograph or record another person without permission and must follow all venue rules.
8. Where appropriate, pupils will be offered a defined opportunity to contact home. Families should use the emergency contact arrangements for urgent communication.
9. Before the bedtime routine, all phones will be switched off, collected and stored securely in a staff-controlled location overnight.
10. Phones may be returned in the morning at a time decided by staff, including for charging where this can be supervised and managed safely.

Location-sharing or tracking does not replace the school's safeguarding, supervision or emergency arrangements. Residential use remains subject to the behaviour policy and the visit-specific risk assessment.

11. Breaches, confiscation and safeguarding concerns

A breach includes refusing to hand in a device, retaining a second device, accessing or using a device without permission, recording or sharing content without permission, contacting others during the school day, or misusing an authorised exception or residential-use period.

Staff will respond calmly, consistently and proportionately in line with the school's behaviour policy. Depending on the circumstances, the response may include:

- an instruction to switch off and hand over the device;
- confiscation for a proportionate period;
- a record of the incident and contact with a parent or carer;
- requiring a parent or carer to collect the device;
- withdrawal or review of permission to bring or use the device; and
- further behaviour, safeguarding, online safety or disciplinary action where appropriate.

Only staff authorised under the school's behaviour policy and current DfE guidance may search for, examine or erase data from a device, and only in circumstances permitted by law and guidance. Any action must be reasonable, proportionate and properly recorded. Material that may relate to a safeguarding concern or an offence must not be deleted; staff must preserve the device and seek advice from the designated safeguarding lead and, where appropriate, external agencies.

When determining a response, the school will consider the pupil's age, SEND, disability, medical needs, religious requirements, safeguarding circumstances and whether the behaviour may indicate that the pupil is at risk of harm. Safeguarding procedures take priority over disciplinary action where necessary.

12. Storage, loss, theft and damage

Phones and restricted wearables brought to school must be clearly identifiable. Pupils and families should use a passcode or other appropriate security and should avoid bringing high-value devices unnecessarily.

Devices are brought to school, transported on school activities and used on residential at the owner's risk. The Trust does not accept responsibility for loss, theft or damage except where responsibility arises under law, including while a device is being held by the school.

Each school must ensure collected or confiscated devices are stored in a secure, staff-controlled location, access is limited to authorised staff, and handover and return arrangements reduce the risk of loss or mistaken return. Any loss, theft, damage or suspected data breach must be reported promptly to the headteacher and managed under the relevant Trust procedure.

13. Parents, visitors, volunteers and contractors

Parents, carers, visitors, volunteers, governors and contractors must not use personal phones where pupils are present or when working with pupils. If a call or message is essential, they should use a designated area identified by the school.

They must not photograph, film or record pupils or staff unless this has been expressly authorised by the school. Arrangements for public events will be communicated separately and must be followed. Volunteers or parents supporting visits must not contact other families, take images of pupils or impose sanctions using a pupil's device; concerns must be referred to a member of staff.

These expectations will be communicated through visitor information, reception signage, event guidance or briefing as appropriate. A concise visitor notice is provided in Appendix B.

14. Communication, implementation and monitoring

The Trust and its schools will publish or otherwise make this policy readily available and explain the expectations to staff, pupils and parents. New pupils, families and staff will be introduced to the policy, and key expectations will be reinforced before visits and residential.

Leaders will monitor whether the policy is understood and applied consistently. Review will consider:

- feedback from pupils, parents and staff;
- records of breaches, confiscations, behaviour and safeguarding incidents;
- the security and practicality of collection and storage arrangements;
- the appropriateness and impact of authorised exceptions; and
- changes to legislation, statutory guidance, technology and Trust policy.

Concerns or requests for clarification should be directed to the headteacher in the first instance. The policy will be reviewed at least annually, and sooner if guidance, legislation or operational experience requires a change.

15. Related Trust policies

- Behaviour policy
- Safeguarding and child protection policy
- Online safety policy
- Acceptable use policies
- Staff code of conduct
- Data protection and information security policies
- Educational visits policy
- Anti-bullying policy
- Complaints policy

Appendix A: Individual mobile phone exception agreement

Complete this form where a pupil is permitted to access or use a phone or smart device as an individual exception. Store the completed agreement in accordance with the school's record-management arrangements.

Pupil name	
Class / year group	
Parent / carer	
Reason for exception	
Evidence considered	
Permitted device and functions	
Permitted times and locations	
Safeguards and staff arrangements	
Start date	
Review / end date	

Agreement

- The device will be used only for the purpose, times and locations recorded above.
- The pupil will follow any instruction to stop using, switch off or hand over the device.
- The pupil will not photograph, record or contact another person unless expressly authorised.
- Permission may be reviewed or withdrawn if circumstances change or the agreement is misused.

Parent / carer signature and date	
Pupil signature and date	
Authorising leader signature and date	

Appendix B: Visitor mobile phone notice

Help us keep our school phone-free and safeguard pupils

- Keep your phone switched off or silent and out of sight where pupils are present.
- Do not use a phone while working with pupils.
- Do not photograph, film or record pupils or staff unless the school has expressly authorised this.
- If you need to make an urgent call, ask reception where you may use your phone.
- Report any concern or accidental recording immediately to a member of staff.

Thank you for supporting a calm, safe and focused environment.