



Birchwood Community High School

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Mobile Phone Policy 2024-25

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1. Introduction and aims

At Birchwood Community High School, we recognise that mobile phones and similar devices, including smartphones, have become an important part of everyday life for our students, parents/carers and staff, as well as the wider school community. However, we are also aware of the significant challenges that owning a smartphone can bring.

Our policy aims to:

- Promote safe and responsible phone use
- Set clear guidelines for the use of mobile phones for students, staff, parents/carers, visitors and volunteers
- Support the school's other policies, in particular our safeguarding and child protection policy and our behaviour policy

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

Note: throughout this policy, 'mobile phones' refers to mobile phones and similar devices.

2. Relevant guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the Department for Education's non-statutory [mobile phone guidance](#) and [behaviour guidance](#). Further guidance that should be considered alongside this policy is [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#).

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 Staff

All staff (including teachers, support staff and supply staff) are responsible for consistently 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 Deputy Headteacher is responsible for monitoring the policy every 2 years, reviewing it, and holding staff and students 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 Governors

The school will report on the effectiveness of the policy to governors termly.

4. Use of mobile phones by staff

The DfE's non-statutory mobile phone guidance says that staff should not use their own mobile phone for personal reasons in front of students throughout the school day.

4.1 Personal mobile phones

Staff (including volunteers, contractors, and anyone else otherwise engaged by the school) are not permitted to use their personal mobile phone in the classroom, during contact time. Use of personal mobile phones must be restricted to non-contact time, and ideally to areas of the school where students are not present (such as the staffroom).

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 use the school office number 01925 453800 as a point of emergency contact.

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 Bard).

More information with detailed guidance on data protection can be found in the school's data protection policy and ICT acceptable use policy.

4.3 Safeguarding

Staff must not give their personal contact details to parents/carers or pupils, 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 pupils. This is in line with our acceptable use of ICT policy

Staff must not use their personal mobile phones to take photographs or recordings of students, their work, or anything else which could identify a student. If it's necessary to take photos or recordings as part of a lesson/school trip/activity, this must be done using school equipment.

4.4 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:

- To issue homework, rewards or sanctions (e.g Class charts)
- To use multi-factor authentication
- Emergency evacuations
- Supervising off-site trips
- Supervising residential visits

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
- Refrain from using their phones to contact parents/carers. If necessary, contact must be made via the school office

4.5 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.

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

The DfE's non-statutory mobile phone guidance says that pupils should not use mobile phones throughout the school day.

At Birchwood Community High School, mobile phones are banned from the school premises. We have worked hard to drive our Disconnect to Reconnect campaign and we feel strongly that mobile phones must not be used in school. Our campaign is to raise awareness about social media and smartphones. We have also ensured our homework policy has reduced the amount of time students are required to use apps/ICT to further support this.

We recognise however that some parents want their children to have access to a mobile device on their way to and from school, for safety purposes. For this reason, all students have been issued with a "Yondr pouch."

The headteacher has shared information on Yondr pouches with parents/carers and additional stakeholders. They are a tamper proof pouch that can be used to store a mobile phone throughout the school day if students bring one onto the school site. These are locked pouches that can then be unlocked at 3.10pm at one of the Yondr stations based around the school site. Additional information about Yondr pouches can be found here: <https://www.veryondr.com/phone-locking-pouch> If a student brings their phone without bringing

their Yondr pouch, they must hand their phone in on arrival. This will be kept in the school office and can be collected by the student at the end of the day. If it is believed that a student may have brought a phone but states they have not, we reserve the right to wand/search students.

5.1 Use of smartwatches by pupils

The DfE's [non-statutory mobile phone guidance](#) includes in the term 'mobile phones' all devices with communications and smart technology that the school chooses to include in their 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 smart watches have wellness and health-related features. Simple activity trackers are allowed however these must not have a notifications element enabled.

At Birchwood Community High School, students are not permitted to bring smartwatches to school. A smart watch will be treated in the same way as a mobile phone.

5.2 Exceptions for special circumstances

The school may permit students to use a mobile phone in school, due to exceptional circumstances linked to their medical needs (e.g Diabetic students testing bloods). This will be considered on a case-by-case basis. To request such permission, parents/carers should contact their Head of Year who will discuss this with the Senior Leadership Team

Any students who are given permission must then adhere to the school's code of conduct/acceptable use agreement for mobile phone use (see appendix).

5.3 Sanctions

If a student breaches our mobile phone policy then there will be serious sanctions:

- Firstly the mobile phone will be confiscated and placed in the school office in a locked cabinet (Schools are permitted to confiscate phones from pupils under [sections 91](#) and [94](#) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006)
- If they are confiscated, only parents or carers will be allowed to collect them. They can be collected on the same day of the confiscation between 3.10 and 4pm. After 4pm, the safe will be locked for the evening and it will need to be collected the following day. (Headteachers can confiscate mobile phones and similar devices for the length of time they deem proportionate, according to the [DfE's guidance on mobile phones in schools](#))
- If a student has a phone confiscated, they will be required to attend On Track and during that detention, they will need to complete a programme of work linked to mobile phone safety.

Any 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, 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 Part 1 of [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)

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

Parents and students should remain aware that staff have the power to search pupils' phones in specific circumstances, as set out in the [DfE's guidance on searching, screening and confiscation](#). The DfE guidance allows you 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).

If inappropriate content is found on a phone, or the school suspects inappropriate behaviour, relevant agencies, such as the police and social care will be informed.

6. 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 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, 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 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 students, their work, or anything else which could identify a pupil

Parents/carers or volunteers supervising trips are also responsible for enforcing the school's policy for students using their phones, as set out in section 5 above, but must refer any 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

Students bringing mobile phones to school for safe travelling purposes, must ensure that they are stored securely at the bottom of their school bag in their Yondr pouch. They must not be carried on their person and they must remain off throughout the school day.

Students 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 students are travelling to and from school.

Confiscated phones will be stored in the school office in a locked cabinet until collected by a parent

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

If a pouch is lost or damaged, resulting in it being unusable, then these must be replaced by the parent at a cost of £15.

At the end of year 11, students are required to hand their Youndr pouches back.

8. Monitoring and review

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

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

If there are any concerns regarding this policy, these should be brought to the attention of the Headteacher in a timely manner.

9. Appendix: Code of conduct/acceptable use agreement for pupils allowed to bring their phones to school due to exceptional circumstances

Code of conduct/acceptable user agreement

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

1. You may not use your mobile phone during lessons, unless the teacher specifically allows you to.
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 students.
5. Do not share 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. 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 criminal. For instance, by 'sexting'.
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 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.