Mobile Phones Policy

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Contents

1. Introduction and aims 1
2. Relevant guidance 1
3. Roles and responsibilities 2
4. Use of mobile phones by staff 2
5. Use of mobile phones by pupils 4
7. Loss, theft or damage 6
8. Monitoring and review 6

1. Introduction and aims

At John Ball Primary School, we recognise that mobile phones and similar devices, including smartphones, are an important part of everyday life for our pupils, parents/carers and staff, as well as the wider school community.

Our policy aims to:

- Promote safe and responsible phone use
- Set clear guidelines for the use of mobile phones for pupils, staff, parents/carers, visitors 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

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 Headteacher is responsible for monitoring the policy, reviewing it every two years and holding staff and pupils 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.

4. Use of mobile phones by staff

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, while children are present. Use of personal mobile phones must be restricted to non-contact time, and to areas of the school where pupils are not present (such as the staffroom).

There may be circumstances in which it is 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):

- 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 852 1601) 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 Gemini).

More information on data protection can be found in the Data Protection Policy and the Online safety policy.

4.3 Safeguarding

In line with the Staff code of conduct and Online safety policy, staff must not give their personal contact details to parents/carers or pupils, including connecting through social media and messaging apps. There are occasions when staff, who are also related to children, will share their personal contact details. These staff must be clear that their details should not be used for school business.

Staff must avoid publicising their contact details on any social media platform or website, to avoid unwanted contact by parents/carers or pupils.

Staff must not use their personal mobile phones to take photographs or recordings of pupils, their work, or anything else that could identify a pupil. 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 are not limited to:

- Issuing homework, rewards or sanctions
- Using staff absence management software
- Use of multi-factor authentication
- Emergency evacuations
- Supervising off-site trips
- Supervising residential visits

There are very rare occasions where school equipment may not work and it is still appropriate to capture children's achievements, such as a school residential trip. If phones are used on these occasions, photos must be transferred to school systems as soon as possible and deleted from phones and digital storage immediately. The Headteacher or DSL must be informed about these instances as soon as possible.

In these circumstances, staff will:

- Use their mobile phones in an appropriate and professional manner, in line with our staff code of conduct
- Where possible, contact must be made via the school office. Protect their phone number from being shared when using their phones to contact parents/carers.

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

In line with the DfE's non-statutory mobile phone guidance that says pupils should not use mobile phones throughout the school day, pupils should not use their mobile phones during the school day, including during lessons, in the time between lessons, at breaktimes and at lunchtimes.

Only Year 5 and 6 pupils that have consent to walk home alone are allowed to bring in a non smart phone. The only exceptions to this are outlined in section 5.2.

All phones brought into school should be handed to their teacher straight away. They will be stored safely throughout the day and returned to children as they are dismissed.

- From September 2026, pupils moving into Year 5 and all new pupils to Year 5 and 6, will only be allowed to bring in a basic phone (sometimes referred to as 'dumb' phones or 'feature' phones) to school that only allows calls and text messages. Smart phones will not be allowed.
- From September 2027, all pupils that bring in a phone will only be allowed a basic phone and no smart phones will be allowed.

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.

John Ball schools approach to watches with smart technology is the same as for mobile phones in Section 5 of the policy.

5.2 Exceptions for special circumstances

The school may permit pupils to keep and use their phone with smart technology in exceptional circumstances. This will be considered on a case-by-case basis and is likely to be only sanctioned for children using a device to manage a medical condition such as diabetes. These children will have a medical care plan that outlines the use of the device.

To request such permission, pupils or parents/carers should contact their child's Phase leader or Assistant Headteacher.

Any pupils who are given permission must then adhere to the school's Acceptable use agreement in the Online Safety Policy.

5.3 Sanctions

If a child is found to be in breach of this policy, the child will be reminded of the expectations and the mobile phone will be taken and stored by their class teacher as is expected. The parents will be informed that the child had not handed in the phone and be asked to reinforce this expectation at home. The phone will be handed back to the child at the end of the day as is the expectation.

Further breaches in this policy will be addressed with the Behaviour for Learning policy and in line with both the Online safety policy with its signed user and parent agreement and the Safeguarding policy.

The DfE's guidance on searching, screening and confiscation gives staff the power to search pupil's phones in specific circumstances and if there is good reason to do so which may include a belief that there are comments that can cause harm to another person, it is being used to commit an offence or that there are unlawful images stored on it.

In these circumstances, children will be asked if they could open and show staff the content being discussed/investigated. Staff will look at the content but ask children to control the device.

In each case, the sanction given must be reasonable and proportionate. The school will also 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

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 and if they are volunteering on a school visit.

This means:

- Not taking pictures or recordings of pupils,
- Not using phones when working with pupils
- Not use their phone to make contact with other parents/carers
- Not take photos or recordings of pupils, their work, or anything else that could identify a pupil

Parents/carers or volunteers supervising trips are also responsible for enforcing the school's policy for pupils 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.

There are occasions when parents/carers and other friends and family are invited to an open event such as shows, sporting events and events run by the Friends of John Ball.

On these occasions we request photos and recordings are, where possible, of your own child and any photographs or recordings are for personal use only, and not posted on social media including Whats app. If everyone respects these rules, it enables lasting memories for the child to see their performances and allows working parents to be part of the school community remotely.

7. Loss, theft or damage

Pupils bringing mobile phones to school must ensure that the phones are handed into their class teacher.

Pupils 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 pupils are travelling to and from school.

As parents and pupils prepare to move into Year 5, the policy will be shared with children and parents. Parents will have to consent to the policy on Arbor and agree to support their child to adhere to the policy. Children will sign the Acceptable use of technology agreement which will include mobile phone use for Year 5 and Year 6 pupils.

Lost phones that are found should be returned to the Assistant Headteacher of Year 4-6. The school will then attempt to contact the owner.

8. Monitoring and review

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

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

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