

Mobile Phone-Free Environment Policy

Purpose

At George Watson's College, we are committed to maintaining a focused, inclusive, and high-expectation learning environment. Evidence from research and other schools demonstrates that unrestricted mobile phone use can negatively impact concentration, wellbeing, and social development. While mobile phones can be an important part of modern life, their unrestricted use in school does not support pupils' academic success or wellbeing.

This policy sets out clear expectations and procedures to ensure a consistent approach across both the Junior and Senior Schools.

Why a Mobile Phone-Free School?

Limiting phone use during the school day has been shown to:

- Improve focus, academic performance, and engagement
- Support mental health by reducing anxiety, sleep disruption, and social comparison
- Strengthen friendships and communication skills
- Reduce incidents of cyberbullying and online peer pressure
- Promote responsible behaviour and self-reliance.

Aims of the Policy

This policy applies to all pupils and seeks to:

- Maintain a focused, distraction-free learning environment
- Promote emotional wellbeing by reducing screen dependency
- Encourage meaningful participation in school life and face-to-face interactions
- Ensure fairness and consistency in expectations for all pupils
- Provide clear guidance for pupils, staff, and parents.

Phone & Personal Device Use Restrictions

1.1 General Restrictions

- No phone use on campus from arrival until 4:30 PM, including during breaks and lunchtimes
- This restriction also applies to AirPods, earbuds, and all other types of headphones
- Laptops and other devices must not be used in corridors and socially seated areas. Laptops can be used for school work in the Blair Library at breaks and lunches
- Pupils, including those in Senior School, will have the option to hand in their phones for safekeeping—to their class teacher in Junior School and to Pupil Support in Senior School—to help avoid temptation.

1.2 Detailed Approach: Junior and Senior School

From a school perspective, there is no need for pupils to have a phone in school, and where possible, pupils are encouraged to leave phones at home. However, recognising there may be family or logistical reasons, pupils may bring a mobile phone to school.

- Junior School Preschool – P7): Upon arrival, phones must be switched off and stored out of sight in a bag or zipped pocket throughout the school day until collected at dismissal
- Senior School (S1 – S6): Upon arrival on campus, phones must be switched off and stored out of sight in a bag or locker
- Phones must remain off and out of sight until 4:30 PM.

1.3 Limited Exception – After 3:30 PM - ‘Stop To Check’

- To ensure pupils can travel home safely, pupils may quickly check ‘stop to check’ their phones outdoors after 3.15PM for JS and 3:30PM for SS
- Pupils should not be walking around, either inside or outside, on their phones after school.

1.4 Dispensations

- Pupils with specific medical or additional support needs may be granted exceptions to this policy where necessary. These will be arranged on a case-by-case basis through Pupil Support and a dispensation card must be carried at all times.

1.5 S6 Exception

- Pupils in S6 may use their phones and headphones responsibly in the S6 Common Room but must adhere to the school’s expectations regarding use.

1.6 Phone use as directed by staff

- Occasionally, a member of staff may permit phone use for an educational purpose e.g. classroom activities, after-school activities or rehearsals. Permission will always be explicit and time-limited. There is no requirement for pupils to have a phone for such activities.

1.7 Contacting Parents and carers

- Pupils may email parents and carers during the school day from their school accounts
- If a Junior School pupil needs to contact their parent/carer by phone during the school day, they should ask their class teacher for help
- If a Senior School pupil needs to contact their parent/carer by phone during the school day, they should do so via Pupil Support or Reception.

Enforcing the Policy – A Shared Responsibility

Parents and Carers

The support of parents and carers is essential in ensuring the success of the mobile phone-free environment. Reinforcing the policy at home helps pupils develop healthy digital habits and remain focused during the school day.

Parents and carers are asked to:

- Contact the school through official channels (e.g., phone or email) rather than messaging pupils directly during the school day
- Ensure their child understands and follows the mobile phone policy, promoting responsible phone use.

A shared commitment between school and home creates an environment that prioritises learning, wellbeing, and positive social interactions for all pupils.

Staff

For this policy to be effective, every staff member must play their part in upholding it consistently. Pupils will take their lead from staff, so it’s vital that staff are clear, united, and fair in our approach.

The expectation is simple: **Every staff member, every pupil, every time, every phone.**

This is not about being punitive—it is about creating a culture shift that benefits our pupils. By ensuring a consistent and fair approach, we help pupils understand and respect the policy. Staff should:

- Calmly and consistently enforce the policy when a breach occurs
- Support each other in maintaining a phone-free environment
- Model good digital habits by limiting their own phone use in school.

Roles and Responsibilities

Pupils are expected to:

- Follow the mobile phone policy consistently and respectfully
- Keep phones switched off and stored in their bags or zipped pockets during the school day
- Use designated school areas for any urgent communication needs.

Staff are responsible for:

- Enforcing the policy consistently to create a fair and effective phone-free environment
- Supporting each other in upholding the policy
- Explaining the rationale behind the policy to pupils
- Addressing breaches in a warm-strict manner, helping pupils understand expectations
- Logging breaches of the policy in 3Sys (staff who do not have access to 3Sys should ask Pupil Support to log on 3Sys).

Procedures for Mobile Phone Misuse

We expect all pupils to respect the mobile phone-free environment. Our approach is based on being *warm-strict*—setting clear expectations while supporting positive relationships with pupils. Enforcing this policy consistently helps create a fair and respectful school culture, where pupils understand that boundaries are in place to support their learning and wellbeing. If a phone is misused, the following steps will be taken:

Junior School (P1 – P7)

- If a pupil breaches this policy, the staff member confiscates and safely stores it until the end of the school day
- The staff member must log the misuse in the pupil's 3Sys Behaviour record on the same day, which will trigger communication with home
- If a staff member does not have access to 3Sys, they should accompany the pupil to their class teacher, where the incident will be logged and the phone stored
- Parents are informed of any phone misuse.

First Confiscation:

- If a pupil breaches this policy, their phone is confiscated and kept in Pupil Support until the end of the school day
- If the phone is confiscated during Period 5 or 6, the class teacher may hold onto it until the end of the school day, ensuring the pupil knows where to collect it
- The staff member must log the misuse in the pupil's 3Sys Behaviour record on the same day, which will trigger communication with home
- If a staff member does not have access to 3Sys, they should accompany the pupil to Pupil Support, where the incident will be logged and the phone stored
- Parents are informed of any phone misuse.

Second Confiscation:

- As above, plus:
- The pupil must attend a lunchtime reflection session.

Repeated Confiscations:

- As above, plus:
- Pupils who still need to bring a phone to school must hand it in to Pupil Support each day
- A whole-school reflection is assigned, taking place after school on Friday
- S6 pupils will have their Time Management rescinded after the October holidays
- The pupil's Head of Year is informed and contacts parents to discuss the issue.

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be regularly reviewed to ensure it remains effective and supports pupils' wellbeing. We will continue to listen to pupil, staff, and parental feedback to refine the approach as needed.