

WHITGIFT SCHOOL

MOBILE DEVICES ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY

Colleagues responsible for this policy:

Oz Bhatti (Deputy Head, Pastoral)

Email: oab@whitgift.co.uk

Adrian Norris (Assistant Head, Pastoral & Boarding)

Email: adn@whitgift.co.uk

Ally Tiltman-Phillips (Director of Safeguarding/DSL)

Email: a.tiltman-phillips@whitgift.co.uk

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Overview

Whitgift School is committed to creating a calm, purposeful and highly aspirational learning environment in which students are fully present, engaged in learning and able to build positive relationships with one another.

The School embraces the positive use of technology for educational purposes and staff have available to them a variety of devices to enhance Teaching and Learning and administration in a controlled and meaningful way. Every student is issued with a School-managed laptop which travels with them between home and School, providing continuous access to the digital tools, resources and systems required for learning.

The School therefore distinguishes between the purposeful educational use of School-managed technology and the personal use of mobile devices. Whilst technology plays an important role in modern education, there is growing evidence that unrestricted access to personal mobile devices during the School day can negatively affect attention, learning, wellbeing, social interaction and safeguarding. The management of personal mobile devices therefore forms part of the School's

wider commitment to promoting wellbeing, belonging, respect, positive conduct and effective learning.

Our approach is also informed by Department for Education guidance (*Mobile Phones in Schools*, February 2026) that prohibits the use of personal mobile devices throughout the school day, including during lessons, the time between lessons, breaktimes and lunchtime. This guidance applies to mobile phones, smartwatches and similar wearable devices capable of sending and/or receiving notifications or messages, accessing online content via mobile networks, or recording audio, images and/or video.

The reasons for this approach include:

- Research indicates that mobile-phone-free environments have a positive impact on learning, behaviour and wellbeing, and that this is not merely a safeguarding measure, although safeguarding is an important factor.
- Studies in the UK and internationally show that removing access to smartphones during the school day leads to stronger academic performance.
- Research highlights reductions in anxiety and social pressures, alongside fewer classroom disruptions and improved focus.
- Cognitive research also shows that even the presence of a mobile phone can reduce attention, memory and learning recall, whereas phone-free classrooms support sustained concentration and better learning recall.
- Texting, messaging and other electronic communication can be misused for cyber-bullying, harassment or other inappropriate conduct.
- Devices with audio, photographic and video recording capabilities may be misused in ways that compromise privacy, dignity or safeguarding.
- Mobile devices are often valuable items which may be damaged, lost or can go missing in School.
- Such devices constitute an attractive target for thieves, both when the devices are left at School and whilst travelling to and from School.
- Public examination boards regard mobile devices as a significant risk to examination integrity and security.
- Excessive reliance on personal devices may reduce opportunities for face-to-face interaction, relationship-building and engagement in the wider life of the School.

Through our pastoral and curricular programmes, Whitgift actively educates students in the safe, responsible and balanced use of technology. The School's aim is not simply to restrict personal mobile devices, but to help students develop the judgement, self-regulation and digital habits necessary to thrive both within School and beyond. Further guidance can be found in the Online Safety Policy and Acceptable Use Policies.

Procedures

General Arrangements

Personal mobile devices, including mobile phones, smartwatches and other wearable communication devices, are brought to School entirely at the owner's risk. The School accepts no responsibility for the loss, theft or damage of personal mobile devices. Parents may wish to consider appropriate insurance arrangements for any such items entrusted to their sons during the school day. Given the School's provision of a managed laptop for every student, and the Government guidance restricting use of personal mobile devices during the school day, families should carefully consider whether there is a need for a student to bring a personal mobile device onto the School site, particularly smartwatches and similar wearable devices.

Games consoles are not permitted on the School site at any time.

Reasonable adjustments may be made where a student has a specific medical, SEND or pastoral need requiring access to a device. Approval should be sought in advance through the student's Head of Year.

Gate-to-Gate Expectations

The School operates a strict 'gate-to-gate' policy, which applies at any time on site, including before the official start of the School day at 8:25am or after 3:45pm whilst at any activities or waiting for the School bus. It is expected that personal mobile devices will remain switched to silent, out of sight and unused throughout the School day from the point of arrival until departure.

Whilst this expectation applies to all students, the specific arrangements differ between the Lower First to Fifth Form and the Sixth Form, reflecting the increasing independence and responsibility associated with older students.

For students in the Lower First (Year 6) to Fifth Form (Year 11)

Students in these year groups will use the Yondr pouch system. Devices should be stored and magnetically sealed in their pouch during AM registration and unlocked only at the point of departure from School. Any devices that are seen from the point of entry onto the School site will be confiscated and any student who actively avoids proper use of the pouch system may receive a formal sanction. All students in these year groups are provided with a locker and School padlock and are encouraged to store their Yondr pouch securely during the School day. Where a reasonable adjustment has been agreed, an alternative pouch system utilising a Velcro-style seal may be provided to support the student's identified need whilst maintaining the principles of the School's mobile device policy.

Late Arrival and Early Departure

Students arriving after the start of the School day, or leaving the School site early with permission, must secure or unsecure their pouch using the

unlocking station located at North Entrance. Staff supervising sign-in and sign-out procedures may assist where required.

Forgotten Pouches

Students who forget their pouch must report this to their Year Group Team immediately upon arrival at School and hand in their device for storage until the end of the School day.

Lost, Damaged or Malfunctioning Pouches

Students must report lost, damaged or malfunctioning pouches promptly to their Tutor, Year Group Team or the School Office. Students are responsible for bringing their pouch to School each day and keeping it in good working condition. Each student is issued with an initial Yondr pouch at the start of their Whitgift journey, the cost of which is met through Michaelmas Term fees. Where a pouch is lost, damaged beyond normal wear and tear, or otherwise requires replacement, students will be responsible for obtaining a replacement pouch from the School Office. The cost of replacement pouches will be charged at the point of issue.

Students who deliberately damage, vandalise or tamper with a Yondr pouch, or whose pouch is rendered unusable through misuse beyond normal wear and tear, may receive a formal sanction in accordance with the School's Values, Recognition and Conduct Policy.

Unlocking Stations

Designated unlocking stations are located at key points across the School site. Students may only unlock their Yondr pouch when leaving School or when specifically authorised to do so by a member of staff.

Additional unlocking stations are available in several supervised areas for use in specific circumstances. These include selected senior staff offices, Year Group Team offices, the School Office, the School Shop, the Medical Centre and Founder's House. These stations should only be used with the permission and supervision of an appropriate member of staff.

Examples may include:

- Late arrival & early sign-out from School.
- Contacting parents or carers for specific and approved welfare, pastoral or safeguarding reasons.
- Medical appointments or health-related needs.
- Authorised School purchases.
- Boarding-related arrangements.
- Other exceptional circumstances approved by staff.

For students in the Lower and Upper Sixth Form (Years 12 & 13)

The School recognises the increased independence and responsibility associated with Sixth Form study. As such, members of the Sixth Form are not required to follow the pouch system as used by younger years, although they may choose to do so.

Sixth Formers are permitted to use personal mobile devices but only within the Sixth Form Centre and at the following times:

- Before School (before 08.25am).
- During morning break (10.25-10.45am).
- During lunchtime (1-2pm).
- After School (after 3.45pm).

Devices may not be used during any teaching periods (Periods 1-7), including supervised study or 'free' periods. Mobile devices must not be used or visible in:

- Corridors.
- The Dining Room.
- The Sixth Form Café (nor will they be accepted as a method of payment)
- Classrooms.
- The Library.
- Any other public areas of the School.

Devices must remain switched to silent and out of sight during lessons and other school activities.

Use of a personal mobile device 'out-of-sight', whilst concealed in a pocket, including for listening to music through headphones or earbuds, is not permitted.

Any mobile devices that are seen in contravention of these rules will be confiscated and a formal sanction may follow. Failure to hand in a device when directed by a member of staff, or failure to identify oneself when requested, will normally be treated as a serious breach of School expectations.

Payments and Practical Arrangements

With the restricted access to mobile devices during the school day, suitable alternatives should be used for practical purposes, such as the use of the School smartcard or a physical debit card for making payments at breakfast, lunch or for tuck/6th Form Café purchases.

In the School Shop and School Office, parents occasionally pay for the student's items over the phone or allow their son access to digital bank cards on a mobile device; in these instances, and only at the point of payment, a student may use their mobile device with the permission and direct supervision of the shop staff. In the case of students in the Lower First to Fifth Form, those using the Yondr pouch system, there will an unlocking station available in these locations. Following

payment, the device must immediately be returned to the pouch and the pouch re-secured. This arrangement exists solely to facilitate payment in these specific locations and should not be interpreted as permission for wider use of personal mobile devices.

Emergency Situations

In the event of an emergency, lockdown, evacuation or other critical incident, students must follow all instructions issued by School staff and prioritise established emergency and safeguarding procedures.

Unauthorised use of personal mobile devices during such situations may:

- Delay emergency responses.
- Spread misinformation or speculation.
- Increase risk to students and staff.
- Disrupt coordinated safeguarding or emergency measures.

Emergency communications will be managed by the School through established communication channels. Parents should therefore avoid contacting students directly during an emergency and instead await communication from the School. Students should not assume responsibility for communicating information regarding emergency situations unless specifically directed to do so by a member of staff.

Use of Mobile Devices Beyond the School Day

The School recognises that students come from a wide range of backgrounds and family circumstances and will therefore have differing levels of access to, and experience of, personal technology outside School. Families may also take different approaches to the use of mobile devices and other digital technologies.

Whilst the School's gate-to-gate arrangements do not apply beyond the School day, students remain responsible for ensuring that their use of technology is lawful, respectful and consistent with the School's values. Online conduct that amounts to bullying, harassment, intimidation, discrimination or other harmful behaviour may be addressed by the School where appropriate, particularly where it affects members of the School community or brings the School into disrepute.

Arrangements relating to mobile devices on educational visits, trips and residential experiences will be determined by the Trip Leader and communicated in advance. Government guidance regarding the restriction of personal mobile devices also applies to educational visits, and arrangements may therefore include restrictions on use, temporary collection of devices or other management measures where considered necessary for educational, safeguarding or welfare reasons.

Students should remain aware that calls, messages or online activity of an abusive, discriminatory, harassing or otherwise harmful nature may be unlawful and will be

treated as a serious breach of School expectations. This includes conduct that affects members of the School community, or may bring the School into disrepute where a student is known or identifiable as a Whitgift student.

The following are strictly forbidden:

- Use of mobile devices for the storage and/or distribution of offensive (including pornographic) material.
- Taking photographs or making video or audio recordings of fellow members of the School community, including staff, without express permission for a specific and legitimate purpose.
- Use of mobile devices in any way that may cause embarrassment, discomfort, distress or harm to another person, within or outside of the School community.
- Use of the School laptops, systems or networks in an inappropriate manner or in breach of relevant policies.

Students are reminded that, should they need to contact parents during the School day, they may do so through their Year Group Team or another appropriate member of staff. Likewise, parents wishing to contact students during the School day should do so via the School Office (office@whitgift.co.uk; 020 8688 9222).

Use of Mobile Devices by Boarders

The School recognises that boarding students occupy a unique position within the Whitgift community. Whilst the boarding house is their home during term time, it is also part of the wider School environment and community. The School therefore seeks to balance the educational, developmental and wellbeing benefits of access to technology with the need to promote healthy routines, positive relationships, effective learning, safeguarding and appropriate rest. Different arrangements therefore apply within the boarding environment, reflecting both the residential nature of boarding life and the School's enhanced duty of care towards boarders.

Boarders are subject to the same 'gate-to-gate' expectations as day students during the School day. Different arrangements apply within the boarding environment and are detailed in the Boarding House Acceptable Use Policy and Boarders' Handbook.

Weekdays (school days)

- Boarders may access mobile devices within Founder's House in accordance with boarding expectations and the directions of the Housemaster or other boarding staff.
- Between 7.00am and 5.15pm, boarders are subject to the same gate-to-gate expectations and, where applicable, Yondr pouch arrangements as day students. For boarders, the beginning and end of the School day is defined by departure from and return to Founder's House.
- After 5.15pm, access to mobile devices on site is governed by boarding expectations and the directions of the Housemaster or other boarding staff.

- Boarders participating in School trips, fixtures or other School activities are subject to the same mobile device expectations as day students unless alternative arrangements are communicated by the member of staff responsible.

Weekends

- Boarders may access mobile devices in accordance with boarding expectations and the directions of the Housemaster or other boarding staff.
- Boarding trips are governed by the arrangements communicated by the Housemaster or trip leader.
- Boarders participating in School trips, fixtures or other School activities remain subject to the same mobile device expectations as day students unless alternative arrangements are communicated in advance.