

Mobile Phone and Smart Technology Policy



Ellesmere College



MOBILE PHONE AND SMART TECHNOLOGY POLICY

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Technology is fully integrated into modern daily life, providing instant access to information. However, mobile devices also serve as a major distraction and a source of significant harm. Many children possess unrestricted internet access via mobile data networks (3G, 4G, 5G) and Wi-Fi. Consequently, some pupils use smart technology during the school day to harass, bully, or control peers, share indecent or AI-generated images (both consensually and non-consensually), or view harmful content, as highlighted in the statutory guidance *Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026*¹.
- 1.2. In accordance with statutory powers under the *Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026*, and the [DfE Mobile Phones in Schools Guidance](#), all schools in England are required to be mobile phone-free environments by default. This policy ensures that the school day—including lessons, transitions, breaktimes, and lunchtimes—remains a focused, calm, and safe space for learning.

2. Aim

- 2.1. The aim of this policy is to safeguard pupils and promote the appropriate use of technology by establishing clear, enforceable boundaries for all users. This policy specifically aims to mitigate the following risks:
 - **content:** being exposed to illegal, inappropriate, or harmful content, for example: pornography, racism, misogyny, self-harm, suicide, antisemitism, radicalisation, extremism, extreme sexual or physical violence, misinformation, disinformation (including fake news) and conspiracy theories,
 - **contact:** being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users or generative AI applications that simulate this; for example: peer to peer pressure, commercial advertising and adults posing as children or young adults with the intention to groom or exploit them for sexual, criminal, financial or other purposes,
 - **conduct:** online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm; for example, making, sending and receiving explicit images, including those generated using AI and online bullying, and
 - **commerce:** risks such as online gambling, inappropriate advertising, phishing and or financial scams. If you feel your pupils, students or staff are at risk, please report it to the Anti-Phishing Working Group (<https://apwg.org/>).

3. Policy Statement

- 3.1. Any reference to mobile phones and/or Smart technology includes any technology that allows the user to connect with internet networks, directly or indirectly.

¹ [Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026](#)



- 3.2. It is recognised that it is the enhanced functions of many mobile phones that cause the most concern and which are most susceptible to misuse. Misuse includes the taking and distribution of indecent images, exploitation, bullying and control of others.
- 3.3. It is also recognised that mobile phones can cause an unnecessary distraction during the working day and can be intrusive when used in the company of others.
- 3.4. When mobile phones are misused it can impact on an individual's dignity, privacy and right to confidentiality. Such concerns are not exclusive to children and young people hence there is a duty to protect the needs and vulnerabilities of all.
- 3.5. The College will operate as a **mobile-phone-free environment by default** during the school day, subject to the specific exceptions and reasonable adjustments set out in this policy.

For day pupils, the school day is normally **8.30am–5.30pm**. During this period, pupils will not have access to mobile phones or smart technology with equivalent functionality, including during:

- lessons;
- movement between lessons;
- registration;
- breaktimes;
- lunchtimes; and
- other periods forming part of the school day.

For boarding pupils, mobile phones will be prohibited throughout the **teaching day**. Arrangements outside the teaching day will be determined in accordance with this policy, the Boarding Principles and Practice, safeguarding requirements and the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools.

The DfE expressly requires this distinction for boarding schools and expects boarding schools to develop appropriate arrangements for the remainder of pupils' time at school, including appropriate private contact with parents and families.

4. Scope

- 4.1. This policy applies to all individuals who have access to personal mobile phones (or similar smart technology devices) on the school site. This includes staff, volunteers, pupils, parents/carers, visitors and community users. The list is not exhaustive.
- 4.2. This policy should be read alongside the Behaviour and Discipline Policy, Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Online Safety Policy, Acceptable Use Policy, Staff Code of Conduct and Boarding Principles and Practice.

5. Staff

5.1. Mobile Phones for personal use

- 5.1.1. Staff should not make or receive personal calls or texts during contact time with children except where there is an emergency or other legitimate reason.
- 5.1.2. Staff should have phones for personal use on silent or switched off and out of sight (e.g. in a drawer, handbag) during class time.



- 5.1.3. Staff should not use personal mobile phones for personal reasons in front of pupils throughout the school day.

This includes use in classrooms, corridors, dining areas, playgrounds, boarding houses and other areas where pupils are present, unless there is a legitimate work-related, safeguarding, emergency or other authorised reason.

This requirement reflects the DfE expectation that staff should not use their own mobile phones for personal reasons in front of pupils throughout the school day.

- 5.1.4. Use of phones for personal use (including receiving/sending texts and emails) should be limited to non-contact time when no children are present, e.g. in office areas, staff room, empty classrooms.

- 5.1.5. Staff must security-protect access to their phone by using an appropriate password, passcode, biometric authentication or equivalent security measure.

- 5.1.6. Staff should not use personal mobile phones or other personal devices to photograph, video or audio-record pupils for personal purposes.

Legitimate College photographs, recordings and videos should normally be captured using College-owned equipment and stored in accordance with the College's data protection and retention arrangements.

Personal devices must not be used to create, store or distribute pupil images or recordings unless expressly authorised under this policy.

- 5.1.7. Staff should report any use of mobile phones or smart technology that causes them concern to the DSL, or Deputy DSL without undue delay.

Where the concern involves a member of staff, the College's safeguarding procedures for allegations or low-level concerns will apply

5.2. Mobile Phones for work related purposes

- 5.2.1. The College recognises that mobile phones provide a useful means of College-related communication, particularly on off-site activities, residential trips and in emergencies.
- 5.2.2. Any personal device used for authorised College purposes may be subject to disclosure requirements relating to safeguarding investigations, complaints or data protection requests.
- 5.2.3. Where possible school mobiles should be used for phone contact with pupils.
- 5.2.4. Personal phones set up for College TEAMS, FROG, SOCS or school e-mail can be used for such purposes.
- 5.2.5. Where an event needs to be recorded and College camera equipment is not available, a personal mobile phone may only be used where this has been authorised and where there is a legitimate College purpose.



Images should be transferred securely to the College's approved storage system as soon as reasonably practicable and deleted from the personal device and associated personal cloud storage thereafter.

This would normally occur as soon as possible and, where practicable, within 72 hours. The deletion period may be longer where operational circumstances, such as a residential trip, make this necessary, provided the data remains appropriately secure.

Personal devices must not be used as a substitute for College-owned recording equipment where suitable College equipment is available.

5.2.6. Staff must not use personal messaging applications or personal social-media accounts to communicate privately with pupils unless specifically authorised under a College system of procedure.

5.2.7. Where a personal device is used for legitimate College purposes, staff remain responsible for ensuring that confidential information is protected and that the device is not accessible to other persons.

6. Personal Mobiles (including smart watches) – Pupils

We recognise that mobile phones are a part of everyday life for many children and that they can play an important role in helping children to feel secure and safe, as well as a useful tool in education. However, we also recognise that they can prove a distraction in school and can provide a means of bullying or intimidating others. When pupils use the school network with their own laptops/tablets, filtering is in software is in place to prevent access to inappropriate material and sites, however, we are aware that phones have access to the internet via 3G, 4G and 5G access and this is one of the reasons that phones are not allowed to be used during the school day, subject to this policy.

6.1. School Day

6.1.1. Lower School

- Lower School pupils may bring a mobile phone to school where this is considered appropriate by their parent/carer and the College.
- The mobile phone must be handed in, turned off, at the start of the school day and stored securely by the College in accordance with local arrangements.
- The phone will normally be returned at the end of the school day.
- Lower School pupils will not normally be permitted to access their phones during break or lunchtime.
- If pupils need to contact home during the school day, they should do so through the appropriate school office or House.
- In an emergency, the College will facilitate appropriate communication with parents/carers.
- Whilst on school trips, mobile phones will normally remain switched off and stored in accordance with the trip risk assessment and instructions of the member of staff in charge.



- Permission may be given for specific photographic or communication purposes where appropriate.
- Unauthorised use of a mobile phone will fall under the Behaviour and Discipline Policy. The immediate response may include confiscation.

6.1.2.Senior School

- Senior School pupils may bring a mobile phone to school but must leave it switched off and securely stored in their locker or other College-approved storage facility during the school day.
- Years 7–11 will not normally have access to mobile phones during lessons, movement between lessons, breaktimes or lunchtimes.
- Where a specific educational, safeguarding, medical or other authorised exception applies, access may be permitted by an appropriate member of staff and only for the agreed purpose, time and location.
- Pupils in Years 12–13 may be permitted limited access at specified times and in specified locations in accordance with section 6.2.2.
- Phones must not be used by sixth-form pupils in areas where younger pupils are present, except where specifically authorised for an educational or safeguarding purpose.
- During quiet time, permission may be sought from the duty teacher to access a phone for an authorised educational, medical or safeguarding purpose.
- If pupils need to contact home in an emergency, they should do so through the appropriate House or school office.
- Whilst on school trips, mobile phones will be switched off or otherwise controlled in accordance with the trip risk assessment and instructions of the member of staff in charge.
- Unauthorised use of a mobile phone will fall under the Behaviour and Discipline Policy. The immediate action may include confiscation.

6.2. Borders – after 5.30pm and before 8.30pm

The College recognises that boarding pupils require appropriate access to communication technology outside the teaching day.

The College will therefore balance the benefits of reasonable access to technology and communication with the need to safeguard wellbeing, sleep, privacy, relationships and online safety.

6.2.1.Middle School

- Pupils can use mobile phones at the end of the school day and in their free time subject to House rules and safeguarding requirements.
- During prep time, permission can be sought from the duty teacher to access a phone for educational purposes.
- Mobile phones and other smart technology may be handed into the duty teacher before lights out where required by House rules or an individual pupil's agreed support arrangements.



- Mobile phones should not be used in communal College buildings outside Houses, except for agreed educational, safeguarding, communication or College events.
- Phones must not be used to photograph, record or share images of pupils or staff without appropriate permission.
- Staff will ensure that boarders have reasonable opportunities to contact their parents and families privately and at appropriate times.

6.2.2. Sixth Form

- Pupils can use mobile phones at the end of the school day and in their free time subject to House rules.
- During prep time, phones may be used for educational purposes.
- Mobile phones should not be used in communal College buildings other than Houses or agreed events, unless specifically authorised.
- Sixth-form pupils remain subject to the College's safeguarding, behaviour and acceptable-use expectations.

The College will ensure that boarding arrangements do not unnecessarily restrict boarders' appropriate contact with parents, carers and family members. The current National Minimum Standards require appropriate arrangements for boarders' welfare and family contact, while the DfE mobile-phone guidance specifically requires boarding schools to facilitate appropriate private family contact.

6.3. Exceptions

The College remains committed to supporting pupils with specific needs.

Exceptions will be made where necessary and proportionate, including for:

- medical reasons, such as diabetes monitoring;
- disability-related needs;
- SEND-related needs;
- safeguarding reasons;
- young-carer responsibilities;
- other exceptional circumstances identified by the College; or
- a specific educational purpose authorised by a member of staff.

The College will comply with its duties under the Equality Act 2010 and will make reasonable adjustments where required.

For example, where a pupil uses a continuous glucose monitor linked to a mobile phone, preventing access to the device may create an unreasonable disadvantage or interfere with the management of the pupil's medical condition.

An exception does not automatically permit unrestricted use of a mobile phone.

Where possible, the College will establish:

- the purpose for which access is permitted;



- when access is permitted;
- where access is permitted;
- who needs to know about the arrangement; and
- what safeguards are required.

This reflects the DfE's specific guidance on reasonable adjustments and medical needs.

6.4. Contacting your Child

We understand that parents may occasionally need to reach their children during the day. If you have an urgent message, please contact the Lower School office, relevant Saints House or the main reception, and we will ensure it is relayed promptly. Likewise, pupils who need to contact home can do so via the Lower School office, relevant Saints House or the main reception.

6.5. General rules

Repeated breaches of this policy may result in disciplinary sanctions in accordance with the Behaviour and Discipline Policy. These may include parental contact, detention, withdrawal of phone privileges or other proportionate sanctions.

- Mobile Phones or any Smart technology must not be taken into examinations.
- Mobile phones should not be taken to the dining hall, chapel, assemblies, changing rooms or toilets at any point.
- Loud speakers must not be used at any time on school site, or off site when under school rules.
- Head phones, ear buds etc. should not be used at any time when moving around the school site.
- If using a mobile phone on school transport, head phones, ear buds etc. should be used, so as not to distract the driver or disturb other pupils.
- Where a pupil is found by a member of staff to be using a mobile phone in circumstances during the School day (8.30am -5.30pm), that contravene this policy, the phone will be confiscated from the pupil and handed to a member of the Senior Leadership Team.
- Confiscated devices will normally be returned at the end of the school day unless a more serious breach has occurred or repeated breaches require parental collection.
- Should a pupil be found to be using their phone inappropriately, the College reserves the right to withdraw the privilege of bringing a phone onto College premises, subject to consideration of medical, SEND, disability and safeguarding requirements.
- The creation, possession, sharing or distribution of AI-generated, manipulated or synthetic images, audio or video intended to harass, humiliate, exploit or misrepresent another individual will be treated as a serious disciplinary and safeguarding matter.



6.6. Searching electronic devices²

In line with the school Behaviour and Discipline Policy:

- An electronic device such as a mobile phone, smart watch or tablet may be confiscated where this policy has been breached or where there are reasonable grounds for doing so.
- The College's Behaviour and Discipline Policy identifies mobile phones and similar devices as items that may be searched.
- A Headteacher or authorised member of staff may search a pupil or their possessions where the statutory conditions for a search are met.
- A search must be conducted lawfully, reasonably, proportionately and in accordance with the College's Behaviour and Discipline Policy and DfE guidance.
- Staff should not routinely search the contents of a pupil's device merely because the device has been confiscated.
- Where there are reasonable grounds to believe that data or files on a device have been or could be used to cause harm, disrupt teaching, breach College rules or commit an offence, an appropriately authorised search of the device may be undertaken in accordance with the law and College procedures.
- Staff should not access information beyond what is reasonably necessary for the purpose of the search.
- Personal, intimate or highly sensitive information encountered during a search must be handled confidentially and only shared with those who need to know.
- Where material may constitute evidence of a criminal offence, particularly sexual images involving a child, staff should not copy, forward, photograph or otherwise distribute the material.
- The DSL should be informed immediately where a search identifies, or is suspected to identify, safeguarding material.
- Where police involvement may be required, the DSL/Head will seek appropriate advice and follow safeguarding procedures.
- Where a device is being retained as potential evidence, it should be kept secure and should not be unnecessarily accessed or altered.
- Any decision to delete data must be made only where lawful and appropriate. Potential evidence of a criminal offence or safeguarding incident must not be deleted merely to resolve a disciplinary matter.

DfE guidance confirms that schools can identify mobile phones as items that may be searched and that statutory searching powers apply where the relevant conditions are met.

7. Volunteers, Governors, Advisors and Contractors

- 7.1. All volunteers, governors, advisors and contractors are expected to follow our mobile phone policy as it relates to staff whilst on the premises.

They must not use personal mobile phones to photograph, record or communicate privately with pupils unless specifically authorised for a legitimate College purpose.

² D of E Guidance: [Searching, Screening and Confiscation July 2022](#)



- 7.2. On arrival, such visitors will be informed of the College's expectations around the use of mobile phones and smart technology where appropriate.

Contractors and visitors will remain subject to the College's safeguarding and visitor-management procedures.

Particular care will be taken in boarding accommodation. Visitors must not gain unsupervised access to boarders or boarding accommodation.

The current National Minimum Standards require appropriate controls over visitors to boarding accommodation and protection of boarders' welfare.

8. Parents and Visitors

- 8.1. While we would prefer parents and visitors not to use their mobile phones while on school premises, we recognise that this would be impossible to regulate and that many parents and visitors see their phones as essential means of communication at all times.
- 8.2. We therefore ask that parents' and visitors usage of mobile phones whilst on the school site is courteous and appropriate to the school environment and data protection requirements.
- 8.3. Parents may photograph or video school events such as shows or sports days where the College permits photography.

Parents and visitors must:

- respect requests from pupils, parents or staff not to be photographed;
- not photograph or record pupils in changing rooms, toilets, bedrooms or other private areas;
- not use photography to harass, embarrass or intimidate another person;
- not use images for commercial purposes without appropriate permission; and
- take particular care before publishing images online.

The College requests that parents do not publish or share images that include children other than their own without appropriate permission.

The College may impose additional restrictions at particular events where safeguarding, privacy or operational considerations require them.

9. National Governing Body Rules

- 9.1. Where student athletes are part of a National Governing Body (NGB), they must also abide by the relevant NGB regulations relating to mobile phones, photography, social media, safeguarding and smart technology.

Any breach of NGB rules may result in referral to the relevant sporting body where appropriate.

This does not replace the College's own safeguarding or disciplinary procedures.

10. Review



The annual review of this policy will be undertaken by the Deputy Head Pastoral, who will take into account any guidance published by the DfE, ISI, the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools and other relevant bodies.

The review will consider, in particular:

- the effectiveness of the mobile-phone-free arrangements;
- pupil and parent feedback;
- sanctions and confiscations;
- safeguarding incidents involving mobile phones or smart technology;
- incidents involving cyberbullying, sexual harassment or intimate images;
- AI-generated or manipulated images and emerging technology;
- the effectiveness of filtering and monitoring;
- SEND and medical exceptions;
- boarding arrangements;
- sixth-form arrangements;
- staff compliance;
- data-protection issues; and
- whether changes to the College's technology, safeguarding or behaviour arrangements are required.

The College will ensure that its filtering and monitoring arrangements are reviewed at least annually and that appropriate records are maintained.

KCSIE 2026 requires proprietors to ensure appropriate filtering and monitoring systems are in place and that their effectiveness is reviewed at least annually. The review should include checks across relevant internet-connected devices and locations, with appropriate escalation arrangements.

Authorised by:	Headmaster 
Date:	September 2026
Reviewed by:	DHP 
Date:	September 2026