



Mobile Phone Policy

Document control

Item	Detail
Policy title	Mobile Phone Policy
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Policy summary

Cokethorpe School is a mobile phone-free environment during the School day. This policy explains why, sets out what we expect of pupils, staff and parents, and describes the arrangements for handing in, storing and collecting phones. It applies to the Whole School, including the Prep School and EYFS. The School is introducing a phased smartphone restriction for pupils in First to Fifth Form over three years from September 2026, while Sixth Form pupils may use phones in designated areas only. The policy is drafted to meet the Department for Education statutory guidance *Mobile phones in schools*, which schools should begin following from 1 September 2026.

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1. Why this matters

At Cokethorpe, we support the principles of young people not owning smartphones up to the age of sixteen. We believe that children and young teenagers benefit from spending as much of their formative years as possible engaged in the real, rather than digital, world; childhood should be characterised by conversation, friendship, play, sport, reading, creativity and independent exploration. While technology undoubtedly brings benefits, we are concerned that early smartphone ownership can erode these experiences and can create pressures that young people are not yet equipped to navigate.

As teachers, we find that smartphones and social media sit behind many of our pastoral and behavioural issues. Friendship disputes continue throughout the evening online, while minor disagreements can quickly be amplified through group chats and social media. Many of the safeguarding concerns, disciplinary issues and pastoral interventions we deal with now have a digital dimension.

Our position is informed by a growing body of research. Studies have identified links between heavy smartphone and social media use and poorer sleep, reduced attention, increased anxiety and depression, and lower levels of wellbeing among young people. Research also highlights the role that smartphones can play in exposing children to online harms, social comparison and addictive patterns of behaviour. While there remains legitimate debate about the precise nature

and strength of these relationships, there is broad agreement that sleep, face-to-face interaction, physical activity and sustained attention are essential to healthy development.

We wish to help parents who choose not to buy their child a smartphone; to that end, we are moving Cokethorpe towards becoming smartphone-free (up to and including Fifth Form) over the next three years. For more information on the impact of smartphones on young people, the following links may be helpful:

- Understanding the impact of smartphones and social media on children and young people: executive summary — GOV.UK (PDF)
- A consensus statement on potential negative impacts of smartphone and social media use on adolescent mental health
- Social media use, mental health and sleep: A systematic review with meta-analyses — PubMed

Building on this policy, the School will introduce a phased ban on smartphones for pupils in Years 7–11 (First to Fifth Form). The aim is to provide a gradual, clear and fair transition that supports pupils, parents and staff. Each phase will be embedded before the next is introduced, ensuring that the community is well-prepared at every stage.

This policy refers to non-smart 'brick' phones. Although these are an alternative to a child having a smartphone, they are by no means regarded as necessary. No pupil is required to carry a phone into school.

In February 2026, the government updated its guidance on mobile phones in schools, stating that 'all schools should be mobile phone-free environments by default'. This policy sets out how Cokethorpe School plans to create a mobile-phone-free environment.

2. What we are seeking to achieve

Through this policy we aim to promote:

- a calm, focused and sociable School environment;
- clear and consistent expectations for pupils, staff and families;
- protection from distraction, inappropriate recording, online bullying and harmful content;
- a practical means for pupils who need a phone for travel to carry a permitted device;
- age-appropriate independence for Sixth Form pupils; and
- a supportive route for reasonable adjustments and individual safeguarding, medical or pastoral needs.

3. Scope and application

This policy applies to all pupils across the Whole School, including the Prep School and EYFS. It applies from the moment a pupil arrives on the School site until they leave at the end of their School day, including lessons, the time between lessons, break time and lunchtime. It also applies on trips, fixtures, residential visits and other School activities, subject to any alternative arrangements authorised and communicated for the activity.

The expectations for staff, visitors and contractors are set out in the Staff Behaviour Policy (Code of Conduct) and other relevant School procedures. Staff should model attentive and responsible device use and should not use personal phones in front of pupils except where professionally necessary or in an emergency.

This policy should be read alongside the Behaviour Policy, of which it forms part for the purposes of the statutory guidance.

4. Definitions

Term	Meaning in this policy
Mobile phone	Any portable telephone, including a smartphone or basic phone.
Smartphone	A phone capable of running a smartphone operating system or installing applications, accessing social media or providing general web-browsing functionality.
Basic phone	A phone intended principally for calls and text messages which cannot install apps, access social media, provide general web browsing or otherwise function as a smartphone. It may include a simple camera. Sometimes called a "brick phone".
Connected device	A cellular-enabled watch, tablet, mobile hotspot or other device capable of independent mobile communication or internet access.
The School day	From arrival on the School site until the end of the pupil's School day, including lessons, the time between lessons, break time and lunchtime.
Approved School learning devices	Devices governed by the School's digital technology arrangements (e.g. Microsoft Surface). These do not provide a route around this policy.

5. Core expectations

There is no requirement for a pupil to bring a mobile phone to School.

Parents and guardians who need to contact a pupil during the School day should do so through the Senior School Office or the Prep School Office.

Pupils who need to contact home must seek permission from an appropriate member of staff and use the arrangements provided by the School.

Phones and other personal devices are brought to School at the owner's risk. Families should ensure that suitable insurance is in place.

6. Prep School and EYFS

6.1 Core expectation

Prep School pupils, including pupils in EYFS, must not bring a mobile phone or independently connected personal device to School unless an individual arrangement has been authorised for travel, medical, disability, pastoral or safeguarding reasons. There is no expectation that a Prep School pupil will have or bring a phone.

Parents and guardians who need to contact a Prep School pupil during the School day must do so through the Prep School Office. A pupil who needs to contact home must ask an appropriate member of staff to use the School's arrangements.

6.2 Authorised phones for travel

Where the Head of Prep or a role delegated by the Head of Prep has authorised a phone for independent travel or another specific reason:

- the phone must not be a smartphone;
- the phone must be switched off before the pupil enters the School site;
- it must be clearly labelled with the pupil's name and class;
- it must be handed promptly to the Class Teacher and stored securely in the Prep School Office;
- the pupil must not access the phone during the School day; and
- the phone may be switched on only after the pupil has left the School premises.

6.3 Trips, off-site activities and residential visits

For off-site activities, the supervising member of staff will manage any pupil phones that have been expressly authorised. Prep School pupils must not take mobile phones on residential visits unless the DSL or Head of Prep School has approved an individual exception for a medical, disability, pastoral or safeguarding reason. Families will be told the communication arrangements for each visit.

6.4 Digital images, recording and personal devices in the Prep School and EYFS

To help safeguard pupils, staff, visitors, volunteers and students must not use personal mobile phones, tablets or cameras to capture or store images or recordings of pupils. Images and recordings for School purposes must be made using School-owned or School-approved devices and stored on authorised, password-protected School systems in accordance with the School's policies and privacy information.

Staff must not use or have personal mobile phones visible when supervising Prep School or EYFS pupils, except where professionally necessary or in an emergency.

Parents and guardians must follow the School's instructions on photography and recording at events and in the EYFS setting. Any event-specific permission does not permit images or recordings to be posted or shared contrary to the School's instructions.

6.5 Breaches

An unauthorised phone or a phone used contrary to this section may be confiscated, stored securely and referred to the Head of Prep or another designated senior leader. Parents or guardians will be informed where appropriate. The response will be proportionate to the pupil's age, the circumstances, any repetition and any safeguarding or reasonable-adjustment factors.

7. First to Fifth Form

7.1 Mobile phone-free School day

Pupils in First to Fifth Form must not use or retain access to a mobile phone during the School day. Any permitted phone brought to School must be switched off and handed in to the pupil's tutor during morning registration. The phone must be identifiable by the pupil.

Handed-in phones are stored securely in the Senior School Office. Phones are returned at the end of the School day.

A pupil who arrives late must hand in their phone at the Senior School Office when signing in.

A pupil who needs to leave the School site early (for example, for an appointment or an away fixture) may collect their phone from the Deputy Head Academic or the Deputy Head, Pastoral and Wellbeing before departing, and should make arrangements to do this earlier in the day.

Uncollected devices are kept securely in the Senior School Office. Phones are not to be charged at School.

7.2 Phased smartphone restriction

From 1 September 2026, First Form pupils must not bring a smartphone or other independently connected personal device onto the School site. A permitted basic phone may be brought for travel or family communication but must be switched off and handed in.

The restriction will move upwards with that cohort until it reaches Fifth Form:

Academic year	Forms covered by smartphone restriction	Permitted phone
2026/27	First Form	Basic phone only
2027/28	First and Second Form	Basic phone only
2028/29	First, Second and Third Form	Basic phone only
2029/30	First to Fourth Form	Basic phone only
2030/31 onwards	First to Fifth Form	Basic phone only

Until the smartphone restriction reaches their year group, Second to Fifth Form pupils may bring a smartphone to School, but it must be switched off, handed in and stored securely for the entire School day. No pupil may use a smartphone during the School day.

No pupil is required to carry a phone into School.

8. Sixth Form

Sixth Form pupils may carry a mobile phone on their person, but outside a permitted use it must be switched off and kept completely out of sight.

- Phones may be used in the Sixth Form Centre.
- Phones may be used during a lesson only when the teacher directs their use for a specific educational purpose.
- Phones must not be used in any library area.
- Phones must not be used while moving around the School site or in front of younger pupils.
- Headphones and earbuds must not be worn while moving around the School site.

An authorised reasonable adjustment or teacher-directed learning activity is an exception to these rules.

Sixth Form pupils remain subject to the School's Behaviour Policy and misuse of their phone may lead to sanctions, including the removal of the privilege of carrying a phone.

9. Reasonable adjustments and individual exceptions

The School will consider reasonable adjustments and individual arrangements for disability, medical, pastoral or safeguarding needs.

- An exception must be approved by the Deputy Head, Pastoral and Wellbeing following advice from the DSL, Learning Support or Medical Centre, as appropriate.
- The approved arrangement must be recorded securely. Information must be shared only with staff who need it to implement the arrangement safely.
- The arrangement must identify the device, permitted use, storage or carriage requirements and review date.
- An exception does not permit unrelated or recreational use.

10. Safeguarding, harmful content and recording

A concern involving a phone may also be a safeguarding matter. Staff must report concerns about bullying, exploitation, harmful or unlawful content, intimate images, threats, coercion, extremist material or risks to a child to the DSL without delay and follow the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Procedures.

The School may confiscate a device and may examine data or files only where this is authorised and handled in accordance with the Behaviour Policy, safeguarding requirements and applicable guidance. Evidence relevant to a safeguarding or criminal matter must be preserved and referred appropriately.

11. Breaches, confiscation and sanctions

The School will respond consistently and proportionately, taking account of the nature of the breach, repetition, the pupil's response, any safeguarding factors and any reasonable adjustment. A device may be confiscated and stored securely. Return arrangements may include collection by the pupil or a parent or guardian, according to the circumstances.

Sanctions are applied in accordance with the Behaviour Policy, which sets out the School's staged approach (Stages 0 to 3), the Head's discretion to escalate, and the arrangements for searching, screening and confiscation. The Head retains discretion to determine the appropriate response, including where a pupil has special educational needs or a disability.

The School may move directly to a higher stage where the conduct is serious. Examples include deliberate recording of another person, harmful or abusive communications, accessing or sharing harmful content, examination misconduct, refusal to follow a reasonable instruction, repeated breaches or conduct raising a safeguarding concern.

12. Trips, fixtures, residential visits and School transport

The School's mobile phone-free approach applies throughout the normal school day. For trips and residential visits taking place outside the normal school day, the School will determine appropriate arrangements for mobile phone use according to the nature, duration and purpose of the visit. Pupils may be permitted access to their phones at specified times and in specified circumstances, provided that their use does not disrupt the educational or pastoral aims of the

visit or compromise safeguarding. Arrangements for supervision, storage, use and emergency communication will reflect the nature of the activity.

13. Roles and responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Board of Governors	Review the policy at the Compliance Committee and receive appropriate assurance on its operation. Ensure appropriate filtering and monitoring systems are in place and regularly reviewed, at least annually in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education.
Head	Approve the policy. Responsible for the operation of the policy and decisions at Stage 3 under the Behaviour Policy.
Policy owner: Deputy Head, Pastoral and Wellbeing (Mrs Amy Prior)	Maintain the policy, and support communication and review. Oversee day-to-day implementation, approve individual exceptions and advise on proportionate responses.
Director of Safeguarding (Mr Joe Hughes)	Lead on safeguarding concerns involving mobile devices.
Heads of Year, Head of Sixth Form and Tutors	Reinforce expectations, support pupils and families and apply early interventions consistently.
All staff	Model responsible use, apply the policy calmly and consistently, secure confiscated devices and report safeguarding concerns promptly. Staff should not use their own mobile phone for personal reasons in front of pupils throughout the School day.
Pupils	Follow the rules for their year group, hand devices in where required and use technology safely, respectfully and responsibly.
Parents and guardians	Support the policy, select compliant devices, use the School Office for daytime contact and raise relevant medical, disability, pastoral or safeguarding needs promptly.
Head of Prep	Oversee implementation in the Prep School and EYFS, authorise or delegate approval of individual travel arrangements, ensure secure collection and storage arrangements, and communicate expectations to Prep School families.
Prep School Class Teachers and staff	Reinforce age-appropriate expectations, follow authorised hand-in and storage arrangements, use only approved devices for School images and recordings, and report safeguarding concerns promptly.

14. Education, communication and implementation

The School will explain the policy to pupils and families and reinforce healthy, respectful and responsible technology use through the following channels:

- LIF-Ed lessons;
- assemblies;
- form time;
- visiting speakers;
- parent information evenings; and
- year group handbooks shared with parents and pupils.

Staff are briefed on this policy at the start of each School year and when it changes, so that it is applied consistently. New staff are introduced to it during induction.

The policy is explained to pupils at the start of each School year, and to parents through the School's usual channels, including at induction events for new families. Pupils are taught both the risks associated with the use of mobile phones and the benefits of a phone-free environment.

Operational guidance may cover hand-in points, labelling, collection, late arrival, early departure and examples of basic phones. Such guidance must remain consistent with this controlled policy.

15. Records, privacy and monitoring

Records of repeated or serious breaches, confiscation, safeguarding concerns and approved exceptions must be factual, proportionate and stored securely. Access to records must be limited to those who need the information for their role.

The policy owner monitors the operation of this policy, including the number and pattern of breaches, and reports to the Senior Leadership Team. The School will monitor implementation, including patterns of breach, safeguarding concerns, consistency and feedback, and will review the policy at least annually, and earlier where statutory guidance changes.

Details of the policy are published so that pupils, parents and staff can read them.

16. Liability

The School will accept no responsibility for loss or damage to any mobile telephone on the premises, nor for any injury, damage, financial loss or impaired academic performance occasioned by the use or possession of one.

In an emergency, every pupil will have access to a School landline telephone.

17. Related School policies and procedures

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following School policies and procedures:

- Behaviour Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Procedures
- Digital Technology Policy
- Artificial Intelligence Policy
- Social Media Policy for Pupils
- Taking, Using and Storing Images of Children Policy
- Staff Behaviour Policy (Code of Conduct)
- Prevention of Bullying Policy
- Equal Opportunities for Pupils
- Learning Support Policy

- Privacy Notice for Pupils and Parents
- Examinations Policy – which sets out the separate and stricter rules on prohibited items in examinations
- Attendance Policy
- Drugs Alcohol Smoking and Vaping Policy
- Conducting a Search Policy

18. Legislation, regulation and guidance

This policy has regard to the following. References are to the current version of each document unless a specific edition is material:

- Mobile phones in schools – Department for Education statutory guidance. Revised January 2026; became statutory on 29 June 2026; schools should begin following it from 1 September 2026.
- Communicating your policy for prohibiting the use of mobile phones in schools to parents – Department for Education, updated 29 June 2026.
- Creating a mobile phone-free environment: school case studies – Department for Education, updated 29 June 2026.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 – statutory guidance, in force from 1 September 2026.
- Behaviour in schools – Department for Education guidance.
- Searching, screening and confiscation in schools – Department for Education (last updated 19 July 2023)
- Equality Act 2010.
- The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, in particular the standards relating to pupil welfare and behaviour.
- UK General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018.