



## Merstone and Forest Oak School

# Mobile Phone and Connected Devices Policy

June 2024

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**Written by** K Poxon.



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## 1. Introduction and aims

At Forest oak and Merstone Schools we recognise that mobile phones and similar connected 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 including the Online Safety Policy.

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 such as smart watches with internet connectivity.

## 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 Designated Safeguarding Lead is responsible for monitoring the policy every year, reviewing it, 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.

### 3.2 Governors

The Governor responsible for Safeguarding is responsible for ensuring the policy is enforced through regular meetings with the Designated Safeguarding Lead.



## 4. Use of mobile phones by staff

The DfE's non-statutory mobile phone guidance says that staff should not use their own mobile phone for personal reasons in front of pupils throughout the school day.

### 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 and offices.

There may be circumstances in which it's 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):

- For emergency contact by their child, or their child's school
- In the case of acutely ill dependents or family members
- Awaiting a call back from the Doctors

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 Merstone: 0121 717 1040; Forest Oak 0121 717 0088 as a point of emergency contact.

### 4.2 Data protection

Staff must not use their personal mobile phones are subject to our Data Protection Policy.

### 4.3 Safeguarding

Staff must not give their personal contact details to parents/carers or pupils, including connecting through social media and messaging apps.

If Staff have passed on contact details to parents/carers or pupils outside of work, for example a close family friendship or work outside of school employment, they must declare this to the Headteacher.

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 which 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 (this list is non-exhaustive):

- Contacting medical professionals and / or school in an emergency.
- Used as a Sat Nav on the school bus.
- To issue homework, rewards or sanctions
- To use multi-factor authentication
- Emergency evacuations
- Supervising off-site trips
- Supervising residential visits although a school phone should be made available.

In these circumstances, staff will:



- Use their mobile phones in an appropriate and professional manner, in line with our staff code of conduct
- Not use their phones to take photographs or recordings of pupils, their work, or anything else which could identify a pupil
- Refrain from using their phones to contact parents/carers. If necessary, contact must be made via the school office

## 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

The DfE's non-statutory mobile phone guidance says that 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. Staff collect mobile phones on arrival, and hand them back again at the end of the school day. On residential and some outbound trips, such as DofE, Pupils may be asked to keep their mobile phones with them, on the condition they are never used, seen or heard unless in an emergency.

## 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 and some can take photographs. Forest Oak and Merstone School follow the same policy for Smart Watches as they do for mobile phones outlined in (5) above.

## 5.2 Exceptions for special circumstances and for sixth-form pupils

Forest Oak Students must hand in their phones for lessons but receive them back again for lunch times and break times to reflect their increased independence and responsibility.

The school may permit pupils to use a mobile phone in school, due to exceptional circumstances. This will be considered on a case-by-case basis. To request such permission, pupils or parents/carers should contact the headteacher through the class teacher.

For example:



- Pupils with diabetes who use their phones to monitor their blood sugar
- A pupil who is a young carer and is a point of call for a parent.

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

### 5.3 Sanctions

- The school reserves the right to confiscate mobile phones if the above policy is not adhered to. (Schools are permitted to confiscate phones from pupils under sections 91 and 94 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006)
- If they are confiscated, Parents / Carers will be asked to collect them. (Headteachers can confiscate mobile phones and similar devices for the length of time they deem proportionate, according to the DfE's guidance on mobile phones in schools)

Please see the schools behaviour policy.

Staff have the power to search pupils' phones in specific circumstances, as set out in the DfE's guidance on searching, screening and confiscation. The DfE guidance allows the school to search a pupil's phone if there is a good reason to do so such as having reason to believe the phone contains pornographic images, or if it is being/has been used to commit an offence or cause harm to another person such as cyber bullying.

The school has the power to search pupils phones if they believe they are at risk of exploitation.

A search of a phone will always be by at least two staff members and include a designated safeguarding lead.

In cases where a sanction needs to be given, the sanction given will be reasonable and proportionate, and may include assisting the parents / carers to better manage internet use in the home. The school will also consider whether 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.

This means:

- Not taking pictures or recordings of pupils, unless it's at a public event (such as a school fair, awards assembly, etc.) and it is under the direction of school staff.
- Using any photographs or recordings for personal use only, and not posting on social media without consent
- Not using phones in lessons, or when working with pupils



## 7. Loss, theft or damage

Pupils bringing mobile phones to school must ensure that the phones are appropriately labelled. They will be stored securely when not in use.

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.

If your school confiscates phones from pupils, add:

Confiscated phones will be stored in the school office in a locked cabinet.

Lost phones should be returned to the school office. 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 of 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

If there are any concerns regarding this policy, these should be brought to the attention of the Designated Safeguarding Lead in a timely manner.