

Hampshire local authority position statement on mobile phone use in schools

June 2025

Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Introduction | 3 |
| Expectations and considerations | 3 |
| Safeguarding and wellbeing | 4 |
| Communication with all stakeholders..... | 5 |
| Review and evaluation..... | 5 |
| Conclusion..... | 5 |
| Hampshire mobile/smart phone - examples of school approaches | 6 |
| Case study one: The Hurst Secondary School - mobile phone pouches | 6 |
| Case study two: Hounslow School - phone lockers September 2024, ‘Brick’ phones from September 2026 | 7 |
| Case study three: Wildern School - RAISE Trust - no mobile phones seen except under specific direction of a teacher | 8 |
| Case study four: Weeke Primary School - smartphone free school..... | 9 |
| Case study five: Cornerstone Church of England Primary School - restricted access | 10 |
| Supporting resources | 11 |

Introduction

In the context of schools in England, the terms 'mobile phones' and 'smartphones' are often used interchangeably, but there are some distinctions as mobile phones are viewed as more 'basic' phones, primarily used for calling and texting, and typically do not support advanced applications or internet browsing. Smartphones are more advanced mobile phones supporting a wide range of applications including social media, and multimedia functions.

Until the Department for Education (DfE) has produced specific guidance for each separate type of phone, the Local Authority will refer to both types as 'mobile phones' and consider them synonymous.

The use of mobile phones in schools is a complex and often contentious issue, both in school and out of school.

While phones can offer educational benefits, it is recognised that they can also pose challenges related to distraction, cyberbullying, and safeguarding. The United Kingdom (UK) Government has recently provided guidance on how to limit phone use during the day and ensuring a safe learning environment: [Mobile phones in schools - February 2024](#) - DfE, however prohibiting phone use in schools is not part of statutory law.

This position statement aims to provide guidance to headteachers, governors, and trustees in Hampshire on managing and considering the use of mobile phones, outlining the expectations of the Local Authority, whilst fully acknowledging that the final decision rests with individual school leaders.

Expectations and considerations

Mobile phone policy development:

- Schools should develop a clear and comprehensive mobile phone policy that covers their use or non-use, and aligns with their overall safeguarding and behaviour policies, as recommended by the DfE: [Mobile phones in schools - GOV.UK](#). Schools may wish to distinguish between the different types of phone use in their policy.
- In drafting a policy school leaders should engage with stakeholders; staff, parents, and students to gather input and ensure the policy reflects the needs and concerns of the school community.
- The policy should address the use of phones during school hours, including lessons, breaks, and extracurricular activities such as field trips and off-site visits.
- The policy should also outline the consequences of misuse and embed the proactive education and engagement of pupils around the safe and effective use of mobile phones.

Educational use:

- If student phones are permitted for educational purposes - this should include off-site activities, schools must ensure that their use is structured and supervised, following DfE guidelines: [Mobile phones in schools - GOV.UK](#).
- Schools have legal duties to support pupils with medical conditions and to take reasonable steps to avoid disadvantage to a disabled pupil caused by the school's policies or practices on mobile phones. This may include consideration of adjustments on an individual basis. See DfE guidance here: [Creating a mobile phone-free school environment](#).
- Schools should evaluate the potential benefits and challenges of mobile phones as learning tools, such as accessing educational apps to identify appropriate and effective ways that smartphone use may enhance curriculum learning.
- School leaders should consider the training needs of staff, parents, and students on responsible phone use and online safety.

Safeguarding and wellbeing

Schools must prioritise safeguarding and the wellbeing of students in their mobile phone policies, in line with DfE recommendations. The Local Authority is clear that this includes the duty to teach pupils how to use technology safely. The policy should therefore link to other policies, including behaviour and pupil wellbeing.

In developing a policy is advised that schools should:

- Review how their curriculum and provision addresses issues such as cyberbullying, online safety, and the impact of screen time on mental health such as through the personal development curriculum and wider school learning opportunities.
- Ensure leaders monitor and evaluate the implementation of this education and consider key findings alongside use of behavioural and safeguarding data and respond to local contextual issues.
- Utilise input from safeguarding leads, Hampshire Improvement and Advisory Service (HIAS) advisers and external agencies such as mental health professionals to develop learning resources and information that supports students' online safety and promotes responsible mobile phone use.

Communication with all stakeholders

It is advised that school leaders:

- Clearly communicate the mobile phone policy to members of the school community, and leaders monitor the consistent application of school policy.
- Provide training for staff on policy implementation.
- Disseminate the policy, through the school website, newsletters, and parent meetings and provide information and offer support for parents in safe use of mobile phones.
- Seek feedback from parents and students during stakeholder surveys and pupil conferencing across the academic year.

Review and evaluation

Leaders must regularly review and evaluate the mobile phone policy to ensure it remains relevant and effective, following DfE guidance and use data from mobile phone incidents, and feedback from the school community, to inform revisions to the policy and the school's approach.

Conclusion

Whilst the Hampshire Local Authority cannot determine the specific policies of individual schools, we expect schools to approach the issue of mobile phone use thoughtfully and comprehensively. We expect schools to develop policies that balance the benefits and risks of phone use, ultimately supporting the educational and wellbeing needs of their students.

This document created in May 2025 will be updated upon further guidance from the DfE.

Hampshire mobile/smart phone - examples of school approaches

Case study one: The Hurst Secondary School - mobile phone pouches

What?

The Hurst School introduced Yondr mobile phone pouches in 2021 to prohibit phone use during the school day.

When and where?

The policy is implemented throughout the school day, starting at tutor time, where tutors ensure phones are locked in Yondr pouches, through to the last lesson of the day, where the teacher unlocks pouches as pupils leave.

Why?

The policy has promoted a calm school environment. Leaders report it has lessened reliance on parents during the school day to allow children to build independence and confidence away from their parents. Another impact has been seen in improved behaviour for learning in classrooms as without the constant reach for phones and the disruption that this brought, students visibly settle. This better engagement in learning has empowered the school to focus intently on the quality of teaching and increasing challenge within the classroom. The policy has also supported break time behaviour where students interact with their peers `building social skills and/or playing games.

How?

Tutors ensure students lock their phones in Yondr pouches during tutor time. Tutors check that every tutee either has their phone locked away securely or does not have a phone at all. Tutors can ask students to look in their bags and empty their pockets to check. Tutors also daily check Yondr pouches for damage and proper locking. Staff can request the pastoral support team to conduct thorough searches if needed, using a handheld scanning device. The senior leadership team (SLT) checks phone pouches throughout the day and verifies students' claims of not having phones. Phones seen outside of Yondr bases are confiscated and returned only if a parent collects them. Every teacher has a Yondr opening base and unlocks pouches at the end of the final lesson of the day.

Case study two: Hounslow School - phone lockers September 2024, 'Brick' phones from September 2026

What?

All student smartphone devices are placed in individual lockers in tutor rooms on arrival at school, to be collected at the end of the day.

When and where?

This policy was introduced in September 2024, with communication to parents starting in Spring 2024. Trustees have just approved an updated policy starting for Year 7 in September 2026 to bring a 'brick phone only'. This is part of a collaborative approach from a number of schools in the Totton and Waterside areas which will involve coordinated communication starting this term.

Why?

The school had a 'see it/lose it' phone policy but noticed a societal shift with more students and parents expecting to communicate independently of the school, using their phones during the day. School leaders believe unfettered access to the internet is also driving many challenging behaviours seen post-2022 with phones being major sources of distraction as well as leading to exacerbated anxiety and addictive behaviours in many young people. The decline in the age of first smartphone ownership is also a concern to the school, with growing screen time in childhood limiting other positive developmental experiences. Suspensions have decreased by 40% in Autumn 2024 compared to the same period last year, with phone lockers believed to be a significant contributory factor.

How?

The policy was developed through consultation with leaders and governors. Staff were consulted on locker placement and are key role models of this policy. Funds were allocated for lockers and resources to replace phones, such as low-cost cameras in art/photography. The policy has clear implementation protocols, including immediate higher-level sanctions for students found with smartphones. Parent communication started early Summer term 2024, with opportunities for questions and a two-page frequently asked questions (FAQ) summary shared with parents/carers.

Case study three: Wildern School - RAISE Trust - no mobile phones seen except under specific direction of a teacher

What?

The mobile phone policy at the Raise Trust states that it ensures any mobile phone use is appropriate for the situation, balancing protection against misuse with recognition of phones as effective communication tools.

When and where?

The policy was established in July 2019 and updated in March 2024. Students must not use mobile devices or headphones during the school day, except under specific direction of a teacher.

Why?

The policy aims to promote safe and appropriate mobile phone use, prevent distractions, and mitigate bullying or intimidating behaviour. It supports other Trust policies related to child protection and behaviour.

How?

The RAISE Trust discourages primary pupils from bringing mobile phones to school. If a child brings a phone, it must be handed in, switched off, and given to the teacher first thing in the morning, then collected at the end of the day.

Secondary pupils must not use mobile devices during the school day, except under specific direction. Mobile devices are the students' responsibility and should be switched off and kept securely. Parents/carers wishing to contact their child during the school day are asked to phone the school. If mobile devices are seen, heard, or used outside acceptable use rules, they are confiscated until the end of the school day. Confiscated devices are securely stored and returned under specific conditions. First confiscations are returned by a member of the SLT at the end of the school day. Phones confiscated more than once require parents'/carers' collection.

Case study four: Weeke Primary School - smartphone free school

What?

Weeke Primary is introducing a smartphone free policy for all children from September 2025.

When and where?

There will be a ban on all children having smartphones in school from the beginning of the next academic year.

Why?

The school has undertaken research into the potential harm of smartphones and the requirements on schools in keeping children safe in education (KCSiE) to safeguard children and are concerned about the impact smartphones and extended periods of screen time may have on children. Within the school there have been incidents over recent years where smartphones have led to police involvement. This policy reflects their commitment to pupil wellbeing.

How?

The school consulted with parents and children about their views on smartphones and these views are supportive of the ban. The ban also includes other internet-linked devices, such as smartwatches. The school is keen to provide education, both for children and the parents in understanding the potential dangers and risks for young children in smartphone use. Children in Year 5 and 6 are permitted to walk to school unaccompanied and so the school encourages the use of 'brick' phones that can make calls and send texts but do not have internet access. They are also providing information for parents of global positioning system (GPS) enabled phones that have no access to social media, WhatsApp, or the internet. Children who bring 'brick' phones into school are required to hand them to their class teacher at the start of the day and they are locked away until the children go home. Any smartphone or internet enabled device will be confiscated and parents will be called and asked to collect the device.

Case study five: Cornerstone Church of England Primary School - restricted access

What?

Cornerstone Primary School operates a restricted approach to mobile phones including smartphones.

When and where?

The expectation that phones not used on the school grounds has been established over time. In school staff embrace a range of digital technology to enhance teaching and learning and adapts their practice as needed.

Further examples of the school's use of digital technology can be found on their website: [Digital Cornerstone - Cornerstone C of E Primary School](#)

Why?

Currently the secondary schools that Cornerstone Primary School feeds have a range of expectations, and the primary school recognises that children may need to use phones and tablets to access resources, such as timetables and homework, when they change school. This school promotes 'the right tool for the right learning task' and sees that smartphones are one of those tools which can be used purposefully for home learning.

How?

Children in Year 5 and 6 are permitted to bring phones to school but must put them in their bag as soon as they are on school premises. Once in the classroom, children hand their phones to their teacher/office to keep securely locked away until the end of the school day. The school provides all children in Key Stage 2 with a school Microsoft account so that they can access their class Team and OneNote, both at school and at home.

Children are taught to use these systems purposefully and responsibly in school for a range of learning purposes on both tablets and laptops. The school's approach is to educate and model how to use online/digital systems, for example children collaborating on projects in groups both within school and out of school, applying for school pupil leadership positions through an online form shared on their class Team when they are at home, or staff modelling responsible and appropriate online communications with classes and pupils through the secure school O365 system.

Supporting resources

DfE guidance: Refer to the DfE's guidance on mobile phone use in schools for additional support in developing mobile phone policies:

[Mobile phones in schools - GOV.UK](#)
[Creating a mobile phone-free school environment](#)

UK Safer Internet Centre:
[Homepage - UK Safer Internet Centre](#)

Journal of research in technology on education:
[Secondary school smartphone policies in England: a descriptive analysis of how schools rationalize](#)

House of Lords library:
[Mobile phones in schools: Mandating a ban? - House of Lords Library](#)

Smartphone free childhood:
[Smartphone Free Childhood](#)

Findings from the children's commissioner's school and college survey:
[cco-school-survey-smartphone-policies.pdf](#)