Mobile Phone Policy

New Seaham Academy

Approved by:	**Steve Bilton (Headteacher)**	**Date: September 2026**
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1. Introduction and aims

At New Seaham Academy, our policy aims to:

- Ensure our environment is mobile phone-free by default
- Ensure the safe, responsible and lawful use of mobile phones, where applicable
- Provide 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

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
- Risk of theft, loss or damage
- Appropriate use of technology for learning purposes

Note: throughout this policy, 'mobile phones' refers to mobile phones and other devices with cameras and recording equipment.

2. Relevant guidance

This policy meets the requirements of section 36 of the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026, and the Department for Education (DfE)'s mobile phone guidance and behaviour guidance. Further guidance that should be considered alongside this policy includes Keeping Children Safe in Education, which sets out the expectation that all schools should be mobile phone-free environments by default.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 Staff

All staff (including teachers, support staff and supply staff) are required to actively enforce this policy and challenge any breach of mobile phone restrictions immediately and consistently.

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 Headteacher is responsible for monitoring the policy and reviewing it every year, 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 Trustees

Trustees are involved in reviewing and agreeing this policy at the start of the academic year. The Headteacher will provide the Board of Trustees termly updates on its implementation in school via the safeguarding item on the trustees agenda.

4. Use of mobile phones by staff

4.1 Personal mobile phones and smartwatches

The DfE's mobile phone guidance states that staff should not use their own mobile phone for personal reasons in front of pupils throughout the school day. All schools should be mobile phone-free environments by default.

Therefore **all** staff (including volunteers, contractors and anyone else otherwise engaged by the school) **are not** permitted to use their personal mobile phone during the school day during contact time - or while any pupils 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 or PPA rooms).

Staff should have their phones on silent or switched off and out of sight (e.g. in a drawer, handbag) during class time. Smart Watches should also be on silent – any messages received on them should not be opened (read) whilst in contact with children.

There may be occasional 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

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 (0191 5813046) as a point of emergency contact.

4.2 Data protection

Staff must not use their personal mobile phones to process personal data, or any other confidential school information, including entering such data into generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools such as chatbots (e.g. ChatGPT and Google Gemini).More detailed guidance on data protection can be found on the school's Data Protection Policy (February 2026).

4.3 Safeguarding

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

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 that 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 or a similar device during the school day in front of pupils for work. Such circumstances may include, but are not limited to:

- Preparation of activities requiring electronic set-up (Kahoot for example)
- Use of multi-factor authentication
- Emergency evacuations
- Supervising off-site trips
- Supervising residential visits

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 that could identify a pupil
- Refrain from using their phones to contact parents/carers. If necessary, contact must be made via the school office or the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher if out of school hours

4.5 Work phones

Currently the school does not provide staff with a work mobile phone.

4.6 Sanctions

Staff that fail to adhere to this policy may face disciplinary action.

5. Use of mobile phones by pupils

The DfE's mobile phone guidance says that the use of mobile phones and similar devices should be prohibited throughout the school day.

Therefore, pupils at New Seaham Academy are prohibited from using mobile phones, cameras or any other similar devices at school. Taking photographs, filming or recording on school premises is a breach of privacy, data protection and child protection legislation.

Using photographic images or voice recordings of pupils or staff without their permission is prohibited. It is a breach of privacy, data protection legislation and child protection legislation.

Only pupils in year 6 with permission to walk home unaccompanied have permission to bring a mobile phone into school should their parents wish them to. The mobile phone **must** be immediately handed to the class teacher on arrival at school and they will be stored in a safe place in the school office for the duration of the school day. Pupils can collect their mobile phone from the office at the end of the school day once their class has been dismissed.

Pupils will be taught the risks that are associated with the use of mobile phones, both in school and more broadly, to make sure they understand the decision to prohibit the use of mobile phones throughout the school day. These risks can include a loss of focus in lessons, classroom disruption and an increase in bullying. Pupils will be encouraged to see a mobile-phone free environment as desirable and valuable.

5.1 Use of smartwatches by pupils

The DfE's statutory mobile phones guidance includes in the term 'mobile phones' all devices with communications and smart technology that the school chooses to include in its 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.

This considered, pupils at New Seaham Academy are prohibited from bringing smartwatches into school. A simple analogue or digital watch is acceptable.

5.2 Exceptions for exceptional circumstances

The school may permit pupils to use a mobile phone in school, due to exceptional circumstances.

In the case of permission due to exceptional circumstances, permission will only be granted where there is a documented safeguarding or medical necessity. To request such permission, pupils or parents/carers should contact the Headteacher.

5.3 Sanctions

If any pupil is in breach of this policy, the school is permitted to confiscate any mobile phone or similar device under sections 91 and 94 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. The Headteacher will store any confiscated devices in the school office where they can be collected by the child's parent at the end of the school day once all pupils have been safely dismissed.

Please note: 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.

Staff also have the power to search pupils' phones and similar devices in specific circumstances, as set out in the DfE's guidance on searching, screening and confiscation. The DfE guidance allows staff to search a pupil's phone if there is 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).

If it is discovered that any inappropriate content is found on a device or any inappropriate behavior is suspected, the school will take immediate and proportionate action. The school will consider whether:

- There are any relevant special circumstances (for example, age, religious requirements, special educational needs (SEN), disability)
- 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 Keeping Children Safe in Education. This will include speaking with the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) or deputy, who will consider whether pastoral support, an early intervention, or a referral to children's social care is appropriate

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:

- Making of or sharing nudes and semi-nudes including images that are digitally altered or wholly generated using AI (such as 'deepfakes' or 'deep nudes')
- 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 and carers are encouraged to reinforce and discuss this policy at home as appropriate, including the risks associated with mobile phone use and the benefits of a mobile phone-free environment.

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:

- No taking pictures or recordings of pupils, unless it's at a public event (such as a school fair), and only of their own child or children.
- Using any photographs or recordings for personal use only, and not posting on social media without consent of the school.
- Not using phones in school during the school day, when working with pupils or while children are present – this includes taking photographs of pupils work or anything else that may identify a pupil of our school.

Parents/carers, visitors and volunteers will be informed of the rules for mobile phone use when they sign in at reception or attend a public event at school.

Parents/carers must use the school office as the first point of contact if they need to get in touch with their child during the school day. They must not try to contact their child on their personal mobile during the school day.

7. Loss, theft or damage

Pupils bringing mobile phones to school must make sure that their phones are appropriately labelled with their name clearly displayed, switched off and ready to be stored away securely when not in use during the school day.

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 or from school. This disclaimer will be explicit in the permission forms parents must complete for their child bringing a device to school. All parents will also receive notification of this policy and the disclaimer herein.

Confiscated phones will be stored in the school office in a secure locked cupboard. The Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher is responsible for these devices – including the safe return to the responsible adult at the end of the school day.

Lost phones or devices should be returned to the school office. The school will then attempt to contact the owner.

8. Monitoring and review

New Seaham Academy is committed to making sure that this policy has a positive impact on pupils' education, behaviour and welfare. When reviewing the policy, the school will take into account:

- Relevant advice from the DfE, the local authority and any other relevant organisations
- Feedback from parents/carers and pupils
- Feedback from staff
- Records of behaviour and safeguarding incidents

9. Appendix 1: Code of Conduct for pupils allowed to bring their phones to school due to exceptional circumstances

PUPIL CODE OF CONDUCT

You must obey the following rules if you bring your mobile phone to school:

1. You must immediately hand your mobile phone or device to the class teacher on arrival. You should collect your mobile phone or device at the end of the school day once your class has been dismissed.
2. You cannot use your mobile phone throughout the school day, including lesson times, in between lessons, breaktime and lunchtime.
3. Phones must be switched off (not just put on 'silent').
4. You may not use your mobile phone in the cloakrooms, toilets or any areas where pupils change. This is to protect the privacy and welfare of other pupils.
5. You cannot take photos or recordings (either video or audio) of school staff or other pupils.
6. Avoid sharing your contact details with people you don't know, and don't share other people's contact details without their consent.
7. Don't share your phone's password(s) or access code(s) with anyone else.
8. Don't use your mobile phone to bully, intimidate or harass anyone. This includes bullying, harassing or intimidating pupils or staff using:
    a. Email
    b. Text/messaging app
    c. Social media
9. Don't use your phone to send or receive anything that may be a criminal offence. For instance, by making or sharing nudes or semi-nudes (including AI-generated images or 'deepfakes')
10. Rules on bullying, harassment and intimidation apply to how you use your mobile phone even when you aren't in school.
11. Don't use vulgar, obscene or derogatory language while on the phone or when using social media. This language is not permitted under the school's behaviour policy.
12. Don't use your phone to view or share pornography or other harmful content.
13. You must comply with a request by a member of staff to switch off, or hand over, a phone. Refusal to comply is a breach of the school's behaviour policy and will be dealt with immediately.

10. Appendix 2: Permission form allowing a pupil to bring their phone to school

PUPIL DETAILS	
Pupil name:	
Year group/Class:	
Parent/carer(s) name(s):	

The school has agreed to allow _____to bring their mobile phone to school because:

- They have parental permission to travel to and from school alone.
- Need their device to support their medical needs.
- Other exceptional circumstance agreed with the Headteacher.

Pupils who bring a mobile phone to school must abide by the school's policy on the use of mobile phones, and its Code of Conduct.

The school reserves the right to revoke permission if a pupil does not abide by the policy.

Parent/ Carer Signature: _____

Pupil Signature: _____

FOR SCHOOL USE ONLY	
Authorised by:	
Date:	

11. Appendix 3: Template mobile phone information slip for visitors

Use of mobile phones and similar devices in our school

New Seaham Academy is a mobile phone-free environment.

- Please keep your mobile phone on silent while on the school grounds
- Do not use phones anywhere in in school or where pupils are present. If you must use your phone, you should leave the school grounds via one of the school gates located on the playground.
- Do not take photos or recordings of any pupils - or any pupils' work that could identify a pupil in school - unless it is your own child at a public event.
- Do not take photos or recordings of staff at any time.

The school accepts no responsibility for phones that are lost, damaged or stolen while you are on the school grounds.

A full copy of our mobile phone policy is available from the school office.

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