



## Crestwood Community School and Toynbee School

### Mobile Phone Guidance

September 2026

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## 1. Introduction and aims

This guidance has been developed in accordance with the Department for Education's updated guidance (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mobile-phones-in-schools/mobile-phones-in-schools>), which sets out the expectation that all schools should be mobile phone-free environments by default, with anything other than this being by exception only. The government are introducing a statutory obligation for all schools to maintain a phone-free environment throughout the school day.

The school's approach is further supported by the powers afforded to headteachers under the Education Act 1996 and The Schools (Specification and Disposal of Articles) Regulations 2012, which provide a statutory basis for searching and confiscating items, including mobile phones, where school rules have been breached.

Schools also have a duty under the Equality Act 2010 to make reasonable adjustments where necessary, and this guidance recognises that there may be exceptional circumstances in which adaptations are appropriate for specific students, for example, the monitoring of specific medical needs, such as type 1 diabetes and similar acute medical conditions requiring a digital monitor.

This guidance reflects Toynbee School's commitment to safeguarding, positive behaviour, and an environment free from distraction, in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education and the school's own behaviour and child protection policies. Compliance with this guidance will be assessed by Ofsted as part of a school inspection.

### Summary:

**Smartphones are banned for all students at Toynbee School. Non-smart phones are permitted, but must be turned off and in bags. A limited number of exceptions apply, such as for medical reasons, but these must be approved by the Senior Leadership Team**

## 2. Relevant guidance

This guidance 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 guidance 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 guidance.

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 guidance.



The Deputy Headteacher is responsible for monitoring the guidance every year, reviewing it, and holding staff and pupils accountable for its implementation.

#### **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).

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

The Senior Leadership Team will decide on a case-by-case basis whether to allow for special arrangements.

If special arrangements are not deemed necessary, school staff can use the school office number as the emergency contact point.

##### **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).

##### **4.3 Safeguarding**

Staff must not share their personal contact details with parents/carers or pupils, including via 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.

##### **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, but are not limited to:

- Use of multi-factor authentication



- Emergency evacuations
- Supervising off-site trips
- Supervising residential visits

In these circumstances, staff will:

- Use their mobile phones appropriately and professionally, in line with our staff code of conduct
- Do 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

#### **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

#### **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.

**Students will not be permitted to carry a smartphone or smartwatch on school premises under any circumstances. This restriction applies even if the device is switched off and kept in a bag.**

Students will only be permitted to carry a device that has the sole functionality of making voice calls or sending text messages. The purpose of allowing such devices is to ensure that children and young people can communicate with parents or carers for health and safety reasons, such as letting them know if they have travelled to a friend's house or are delayed for any reason.

An exception to this rule will be made for pupils who require a device as part of a medical plan, such as for the active monitoring of diabetes. In such cases, the use of a smartphone or smartwatch must



be agreed upon between the school and parents or carers as part of the pupil's individual medical plan.

For school trips, specific guidance regarding the use of any smart technology will be provided prior to the event.

With our revised approach, students will not be permitted to carry any device that resembles a smartphone, including those that are claimed to be "locked down".

### **Brick phones**

If you need to contact your child while they travel to and from school, a simple 'brick' phone is more than enough. 'Brick' phones do not have internet connectivity, and they are inexpensive.

Brick phones are significantly more affordable and designed to fulfil the essential function of allowing children to contact home, for example, when making last-minute arrangements such as visiting a friend. Furthermore, since they are lower in value, they can reasonably be stored in bags. If you would like to track your child on their way to and from school, a GPS tracker can be used in addition to a brick phone.

Finally, we thank parents and carers for your partnership and support on this journey. Working together, we can safeguard children and preserve childhood.

By doing so, we can not only protect our children's mental health and wellbeing, but we can also set a standard for how communities can come together to challenge the norms that no longer serve our children.

You can find a list of non-smart phones [here](#).

### **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 guidance.

Smartwatches are wristwatches with smart technology in them.

- Smartwatches are not permitted in school.
- On some rare occasions(usually for medical purposes), reasonable adjustments will be made at the discretion of the headteacher.

### **6. Sanctions**

If a student is seen or heard with a phone or electronic device, or if there is a reasonable suspicion of its use, during the compulsory school day:



1. **Immediate Confiscation:** The device will be immediately confiscated by any member of staff. This may involve the pupil being searched, in line with our Behaviour Policy
2. **Secure Storage:** The device will be placed securely in a sealed envelope, clearly labelled with the student's full name and year group.
3. **Logging:** The confiscation incident will be recorded on Arbor, the school's management information system, detailing the date, time, staff member, and reason for confiscation.
4. **Parental Contact:** Where possible and appropriate, the confiscating staff member, or a designated member of the pastoral team, will contact the student's parent/guardian via phone or email to confirm the confiscation and arrange for the collection of the device.
5. **Student Responsibility for Communication:** The student will have the ultimate responsibility for explaining the confiscation to their parent/guardian.
6. **Brick Phones- Return to the student at the end of the school day:** Students will be able to collect their phones from the main office at the end of each day.
7. **Smart Phones- No Return to Student:** Confiscated items (including mobile phones, smartwatches, and other electronic devices) will **not** be returned directly to students. Where persistent breaches of the rules occur, the school reserves the right to confiscate devices for longer periods of time. Further sanctions, in line with the Behaviour Policy, may also be used for students who persistently break the rules. Students may be required to hand in their phone at the start of the day if this issue continues.



## 7. FAQ

### 1. Do schools have a legal right to keep a child's phone?

Yes, the DfE guidance allows schools to confiscate property. As part of the guidance development, we have spoken to our local police team, and they have confirmed we have a legal right to do so and that they support our right to confiscated property, as this is a civil matter and supported by DFE guidance. Ofsted supports schools' rights to confiscation of banned items in line with the DFE guidance.

### 2. How can I contact my child if they do not have a smartphone?

There will be no change during school hours, as students are not permitted to use mobile phones during this time. If communication is required, it should be directed through the school reception, as per existing protocols. Importantly, this is not a total ban on mobile phones. If you feel your child must have a means of communication during their journey to and from school, a basic (non-smart) phone enables this while avoiding the risks associated with smartphone use. This approach supports a safer and more focused school environment by reducing exposure to potential harms from both their own and others' smartphones.

### 3. I want to be able to track my child.

There are basic tracking solutions available that do not involve smartphones. Devices such as Apple Air Tags or similar alternatives allow parents and carers to monitor a child's location at school and to and from school without providing internet access, camera facility or social media exposure.

### 4. My child's smartphone has parental controls—isn't that safe enough?

While parental controls can be helpful, they are not foolproof. A recent Parentkind poll revealed that 47% of children with parental controls had managed to bypass them. Schools cannot verify or monitor the settings on every student's device and must consider broader risks, including exposure to inappropriate content via other students' phones, being photographed or filmed without consent at school and having the content shared or uploaded to the internet. Smartphones are designed to be engaging and, in many cases, addictive. With children receiving hundreds of notifications daily, it is unrealistic to expect parents and carers to monitor all activities. A smartphone-free school environment minimises these risks and helps protect children's mental well-being and development.

### 5. Do I have to buy a simple phone for my child?

No, there is no obligation to provide your child with a phone. However, if you wish to maintain communication with your child outside school hours, a simple mobile phone is an affordable option. These devices typically cost between £15 and £50 new, and under £10 second-hand. Pay-as-you-go SIM cards are often free, and contracts offering unlimited calls and texts can be found for as little as £3–£4 per month. As they do not use mobile data, ongoing costs remain low.

### 6. I want to decide when my child gets a smartphone.



Absolutely. Parents and carers know their children best and should make decisions about smartphone use based on their own judgment. A smartphone-free school guidance supports this by maintaining a neutral environment. Parents and carers who feel their child is ready for a smartphone can introduce one at home, while those who feel their child is not yet emotionally prepared can send them to school with the confidence that they won't be exposed to inappropriate content or peer pressure from other students' devices or be photographed or filmed without consent. This approach not only helps to safeguard children at school, but it also helps level the playing field, reducing social pressure and preventing any student from feeling excluded, whether they have a smartphone or not.

### **7. My child needs a phone to pay for the bus.**

While many people use apps for bus fares, physical smart cards are a widely available and convenient alternative. These cards can be topped up online or directly on the bus. It's worth noting that many schools across major towns and cities have already adopted smartphone-free policies. Students are managing complex journeys using public transport without smartphones, demonstrating that this is entirely achievable.

### **8. My child has a medical condition or special educational need and requires a phone.**

If there are exceptional circumstances that necessitate your child having access to a phone during the school day, please contact the school directly to discuss appropriate arrangements.

### **9. Don't students need smartphones for home learning?**

This is a common misconception. There is no requirement for students to own a smartphone in secondary school. If home learning requires internet access, parents and carers are free to choose the most appropriate device for home use. This may be a smartphone, tablet, or computer, whichever suits your household best. Students also have access to computers daily before school, during break, lunchtime and homework club after school in the library. However, to clarify: no student is required to have a smartphone to complete school work during the school day or on their journey to and from school.



**Appendix 1:**

**Permission form allowing a pupil to bring their phone to school**

PUPIL DETAILS	
<b>Pupil name:</b>	
<b>Year group/class:</b>	
<b>Parent/carer(s) name(s):</b>	

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

- Are a registered young carer
- Need the phone to support their medical needs

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

Parent/carer signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Pupil signature (where appropriate): \_\_\_\_\_

FOR SCHOOL USE ONLY	
<b>Authorised by:</b>	
<b>Date:</b>	