

MOBILE PHONE & SMARTWATCH RESPONSIBLE USE POLICY

Non Sibi Sed Aliis

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

Psalm 119, vs 105

"Avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness."
2 Timothy 2:16

This policy document and the content contained therein remains the responsibility of the Headteacher and Governing Body of the school. No amendments can be made without their express instructions and they remain the final arbiters in any matters relating to it.

Review Date: Spring Term 2026

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Reviewed By: Mrs A Wilson

APPROVED BY THE HEADTEACHER – Spring Term 2026

MOBILE PHONE AND SMARTWATCH RESPONSIBLE USE POLICY

RATIONALE

As a Church of England school, Balshaw's believes that each person is made in the image of God, which implies that we should respect the dignity and uniqueness of the individual. We believe all students have the right to learn in an environment in which they feel safe, happy, and supported. This is to ensure that each individual is given maximum opportunity to achieve academic excellence and to be free from harm to use the talents God gave us to the full.

The widespread ownership of mobile phone and growing popularity of Smartwatch technology among young people requires that school, teachers, students, parents and carers take steps to ensure that mobile phone/Smartwatches are used responsibly at school. This Responsible Use Policy is designed to ensure that potential issues involving mobile Mobile phone/Smartwatch/ can be clearly identified and addressed. This will ensure the benefits that mobile phone/Smartwatches provide (such as increased safety) can continue to be enjoyed by our students whilst at the same time ensuring they do not interfere with learning.

Balshaw's has established the following Responsible Use Policy for mobile phone/Smartwatches that provides teachers, students, parents and carers with guidelines and instructions for the appropriate use of mobile phone/Smartwatches during school hours and when on site.

Students, their parents or carers must read and understand the Responsible Use Policy as a condition upon which permission is given to bring mobile phone/Smartwatches to school. This is done by parents signing a letter on joining the school.

The Responsible Use Policy for mobile phone/Smartwatches also applies to students during school trips and extra-curricular activities both on the school site and off-site, unless alternative arrangements have been made.

CONTEXT

In order for this policy to be effective it is inextricably linked with other school policies. It should be read in conjunction with the following:

- Teaching and Learning Policy
- Behaviour for Learning Policy
- Safeguarding, Child Protection Policy and Procedures
- Attendance and Punctuality Policy
- Equality Policy
- Home School Agreement and Student Code of Conduct
- Anti-Bullying Policy

At Balshaw's we recognise that personal communication through mobile technologies is an accepted part of everyday life but that such technologies need to be used well.

We understand that mobile phone/Smartwatches are owned by a significant number of students and recognise the need for parents to give their children mobile phone/Smartwatches to protect them from everyday risks involving personal security and safety. There is also increasing concern about children travelling alone on public transport or commuting long distances to school. It is

acknowledged that providing a child with a mobile phone/Smartwatch gives parents reassurance that they can contact their child if they need to speak to them urgently.

We do not consider it realistic or desirable to prohibit phones/Smartwatches being brought to school, nor is it logistically possible for school to collect phones/Smartwatches in each morning and return them in the afternoon. It is the responsibility of students who bring mobile phones/Smartwatches to school to abide by the guidelines outlined in this document. The decision to provide a mobile phone/Smartwatch to their children should be made by parents or carers. It is incumbent upon parents to understand the capabilities or the phone/Smartwatch and the potential use/mis-use of those capabilities.

Parents/carers should be aware if their child takes a mobile phone/Smartwatch to school it is assumed household insurance will provide the required cover in the event of loss or damage.

It is our policy to allow students to have a mobile phone/Smartwatch with them in school under the conditions outlined in this policy. Despite this the use of mobile phone/Smartwatch does present a number of issues for us as a school. For example:

- The high monetary value of many phones/Smartwatches. They are a valuable piece of equipment prone to loss and theft.
- The integration of cameras into phones/Smartwatches leading to potential child protection and data protection issues with regard to students filming events, each other, inappropriately taking pictures of events/each other and using or distributing images inappropriately.
- The potential for mobile technology to be used to bully other students.
- The potential to use the phone/Smartwatch e.g. for texting whilst on silent mode in class.
- As a result of the increasing sophistication of mobile phone/Smartwatch technology most students carry a phone/Smartwatch which enables them to access the internet and bypass the school's safety network.

RESPONSIBLE USE

Students are required to use phones/Smartwatches responsibly at all times.

1. The school is a workplace, and phone/Smartwatches can interfere with the atmosphere and good order of the workplace, even when in silent mode. Balshaw's expects that phones/Smartwatches will be switched off and kept in bags during and between lessons.
2. Tutors will ask students to switch off their phones and place them in their bags at Registration time if they have not done this on the school gate at 8:30am
3. Phones/Smartwatches should be handed into the valuables box in PE before going into the changing room and before all examinations and in whilst in Inclusion.
4. Unless express permission is granted, mobile phones/Smartwatches should not be used by students to make calls, send SMS messages, surf the internet, take photos of themselves, other students, classrooms, members of staff or use any other application during school lessons and other educational activities, such as assemblies and from 8.30am until the student leaves the school site at the end of the school day.

5. Phones/Smartwatches must always be switched off (not on silent mode) and kept out of view of staff by being secured in students bags. If a member of staff sees a student using a phone/Smartwatch without the express permission of a member of staff on the school site it will be confiscated by the member of staff. Also if a mobile phone is visible in a student's blazer pocket it will be confiscated. If a student wants to look at the time he/she should wear a watch.
6. Mobile phones/Smartwatches must not disrupt classroom lessons with ring tones, music or beeping. Mobile phones/Smartwatches should be turned off during lesson time and kept in bags. Students should not read SMS messages on Smartwatches at any time.
7. The Bluetooth function of a mobile phone/Smartwatch/ must be switched off at all times and not be used to send images or files to other mobile phones. This also applies to Smartwatches.
8. Mobile phones Smartwatches are not to be taken into changing rooms or toilets or used in any situation that may cause embarrassment or discomfort to other students, staff or visitors to the school.
9. Should there be more than one disruption to lessons caused by a mobile phone/Smartwatch, the responsible student will face disciplinary actions as sanctioned by the Headteacher. This may include a mobile phone/Smartwatch ban in school, SLT detention or time in the Inclusion Unit. The phone will also be confiscated.
10. Students must ensure that files stored on their phone/Smartwatches do not contain violent, degrading or offensive images. The transmission of some images/information can be a criminal offence and will be dealt with as such by the school. A fixed penalty notice can be issued by the Police for misuse of technology.
11. Students are not permitted to use any mobile phone/Smartwatch or device in an examination area. These are banned in the examination room and must be handed in to staff **prior** to the exam starting. Failure to comply with this will result in students facing a ban from all examinations and marks being null and void.
12. Students who bring a mobile phone/Smartwatch to school should leave it locked away in their locker/bag when they arrive. To reduce the risk of theft during school hours, students who carry mobile phone/Smartwatch are advised to keep them well concealed and not 'advertise' they have them.
13. Mobile phones/Smartwatches that are found in the school and whose owner cannot be located should be handed to the office.
14. The school accepts no responsibility for replacing lost, stolen or damaged mobile phones/ Smartwatches.

15. The school accepts no responsibility for students who lose or have their mobile phone/Smartwatches stolen whilst travelling to and from school.
16. It is strongly advised that students use passwords/pin numbers to ensure that unauthorised phone/Smartwatch calls cannot be made on their phone/Smartwatch (e.g. by other students, or If stolen). Students must keep their password/pin numbers confidential. Mobile phone/Smartwatch and/or passwords may not be shared

INAPPROPRIATE CONDUCT

1. Mobile phones/Smartwatches are banned from all examinations nationally. Students must hand the phone/Smartwatch to invigilators before entering the exam hall. Any student found in possession of a mobile phone/Smartwatch during an examination will have that paper disqualified. Such an incident may result in all other exam papers being disqualified. There are strict guidelines set out by all examination boards as to the use of mobile phones/smartwatches in exams if a student is caught doing this and severe consequences.
2. Cyber-bullying is completely unacceptable, and will be followed up by the school as serious misbehaviour in line with our Anti-Bullying policy. Using mobile phone/Smartwatch to bully and threaten other students is totally unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Cyber bullying will not be tolerated. In some cases it can constitute criminal behaviour. If the use of technology humiliates, embarrasses, or causes offence it is unacceptable regardless of whether 'consent' was given.
3. It is forbidden for students to victimise another student and use their mobile phone/Smartwatch to take videos and pictures of acts to denigrate and humiliate that student and then send the pictures to other students or upload it to a website or social media for public viewing. This also includes using mobile phone/Smartwatch to photograph or film any student or member of staff without their consent. In the event that this happens the student will be asked and expected to delete those images immediately and given a suitable punishment. It is a criminal offence to use a mobile phone/Smartwatch to menace, harass or offend another person and almost all calls, text messages and emails can be traced by the Police.
4. Any student who uses vulgar, derogatory, or obscene language whilst using a mobile phone/Smartwatch will be given an appropriate sanction.
5. Students with mobile phone/Smartwatch may not engage in personal attacks, harass another person, or post private information about another person using SMS messages, taking/sending photos or objectionable images, and phone/Smartwatch calls. Students using mobile phone/Smartwatch to bully other students face sanctions.(it should be noted that it is a criminal offence to use a mobile phone/Smartwatch to menace, harass or offend another person. As such, the school may consider it appropriate to involve the Police).
6. Students must ensure that files stored on their phone/Smartwatch do not contain violent, degrading, racist or pornographic images. The transmission of such images is a criminal offence. Similarly, 'sexting' – which is the sending of personal sexual imagery – is also a criminal offence. School will hand all such evidence to the Police.

7. Students who use their phone inappropriately as outlined in this guidance will be issued with an appropriate sanction.

SANCTIONS FOR INFRINGING SCHOOL RULES ON SMARTPHONES AND MOBILE PHONES

Students who infringe the rules set out in this document will face having their phone/Smartwatch confiscated by teachers. If the phone/Smartwatch is being used inappropriately the student will have his/her mobile phone/Smartwatch confiscated and must hand it to a teacher when requested. **Failure to do so will incur a sanction separately.**

1. On the first infringement of this policy the mobile phone/Smartwatch would be confiscated by the teacher and taken to the school office. The student will be given a receipt for the phone/Smartwatch. The student's parent/carer will be able to collect the mobile phone/Smartwatch at the end of the school day (3:10pm) if they choose. **If a parent cannot collect the phone on the same day the phone will be held securely in school until the end of the following school day at 3:10pm and then returned to the student.**
2. Any student who has their phone confiscated for whatever reason will be given a SLT detention on a Friday evening 3:10-4:25pm as a sanction in the first instance.
3. If a student has a phone confiscated on a second occasion the phone will again be confiscated and the student will receive a day in Social Inclusion as a sanction and the phone will need to be collected by a parent/carer from a member of the Senior Leadership Team
4. A third breach of this policy will result in the student spending one full day in the school Inclusion Unit from 8:30-4:10pm and the phone will need to be collected by a parent/carer from a member of the Senior Leadership Team
5. If a student continues to flout school rules on mobile phones in school after all sanctions have been issued a parental meeting will be arranged between the Headteacher and parent and the Headteacher will consider whether a Fixed Term Suspension is appropriate for continual infringement of school rules.
6. At any time, any infringements of the mobile phone/Smartwatch code of conduct may result in the Headteacher issuing a ban on bringing a mobile phone/Smartwatch to school for the student.

At Balshaw's we are fully aware that some types of harassing or threatening behaviour or communications could be a criminal offence, for example under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, the Malicious Communications Act 1988, the Communications Act 2003 and the Public Order Act 1986. Under the Malicious Communication Act 1988, it is an offence for a person to send an electronic communication to another person with intent to cause distress or anxiety or to send an electronic communication which conveys a message which is indecent or grossly offensive, a threat, or information which is false and know or believed to be false by the sender. If school feel an offence may have been committed by a students in this way the Head teacher will seek guidance from the Police as to the next course of action.

As set out in the previous section, failure to heed the rules set out in this document may result in an alleged incident – of a serious nature – being referred to the Police for investigation. In such cases, the parent or carer would be notified immediately.

NB – The Headteacher is the final arbiter of all sanctions given for use of a mobile phone in school. Sanctions will be applied to achieve a consistent approach to misdemeanours relating to inappropriate mobile phone use.

EMERGENCIES

If a student needs to contact his/her parents/guardians in exceptional circumstances they will be allowed to use a school phone. If a parent needs to contact children urgently they should phone the school office and a message will be relayed promptly.

Parents/carers are reminded that in cases of emergency, the school office remains a vital and appropriate point of contact and can ensure your child is reached quickly and assisted in any relevant way. Passing on messages through school reception also reduces the likelihood of disrupting lessons inadvertently.

Students are not permitted to contact home directly to ask parents to collect them if they are feeling unwell. This needs to be done via the school office where a member of school staff will contact parents.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR MOBILE PHONE/SMARTWATCH/SMARTWATCHES

School accepts **no responsibility whatsoever** for theft, loss, damage or health effects (potential or actual) relating to mobile phone/Smartwatch. It is the responsibility of parents and students to ensure mobile phone/Smartwatch are properly insured.

NB. The term 'mobile phone/Smartwatch' in this policy refers to any mobile phone/Smartwatch. MP3/4 player, iPods, iPads, Tablets, I-Watch or any other similar portable device or internet capable watch.

This policy has been produced using guidance under Section 2 of the 2011 Education Act which sets out new provisions about mobile phone/Smartwatch and other electronic devices.

STAFF GUIDANCE FOR SAFEGUARDING STUDENTS

- Staff should not contact students or parents from their personal mobile phone in or out of school time or give their mobile phone number to students or parents. If a member of staff needs to make telephone contact with a pupil, a school telephone should be used in the staff room.
- Staff should not share personal contact details through social media and messaging apps.
- Staff should regularly monitor and update their privacy settings on social media sites
- Staff should never accept a 'friend request' or respond to any posts that may deliberately or inadvertently include them but inform their line manager or Senior Leader of the contact.
- Staff should never send to, or accept from, colleagues or students, texts or images that could be viewed as inappropriate.
- Staff are not permitted to take photos or videos of students or anything else (e.g., work) that might identify the pupil.

- If photos or videos are being taken as part of the school curriculum or for promotional purposes then school equipment must be used unless agreed in advance by the Headteacher in specific emergency circumstances. If this agreement is given, boundaries, protocols for supervision and image deletion will be agreed with the Headteacher and confirmation of protocols being followed given.
- In circumstances such as outings and off site visits, staff will agree with their Line Manager the appropriate use of personal mobile phones in the event of an emergency.
- Staff should not allow themselves to be photographed by a pupil(s).
- Using a personal mobile for work purposes may in some circumstances, be appropriate. Where possible this should always be agreed with a line manager or Senior Leader in advance. Such circumstances may include, but are not limited to:
- Emergency evacuations or Parental contact in emergencies (mobile phones setting that allow for the number not to be identified should be used)

This guidance should be seen as a safeguard for members of staff and the school. Any breach of school policy may result in disciplinary action against that member of staff.

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