

Mobile phone policy

At Harrow Gate Primary Academy we are committed to ensuring the safety of children in our care. We recognise that mobile phones in the school and centre have a role to play for the purpose of communication, but we are aware that casual or inappropriate use of mobile phones at school could pose a risk to children and adults.

The enhanced functions of many mobile phones are of most concern and are most susceptible to misuse. Misuse includes the taking and distribution of indecent images, exploitation and bullying.

Mobile phones can cause an unnecessary distraction during the working day and can be intrusive when used in the company of others. When mobile phones are misused, it can impact on an individual's dignity, privacy and right to confidentiality. Such concerns are not exclusive to children and young people; hence there is a duty to protect the needs and vulnerabilities of everyone.

It can be difficult to detect when such devices are present or being used, particularly in relation to enhanced functions, such as cameras. The use of all mobile phones is, therefore, limited, regardless of their capabilities.

The aim is to avoid distraction and disruption of the working day, and to minimise the opportunities for any individual to make any covert images or misuse functions in any other way.

This policy applies to all staff, children, volunteers and visitors.

*Please note that for the purposes of this policy, the term 'mobile phone' also covers any electronic device with the capacity to be used as a form of communication, either through the device itself or any applications stored on the device.

Staff Personal Mobile Phones

- Staff must not carry personal mobile phones while working. This protects staff from being distracted from their work and from allegations of inappropriate use. Phones must be safely stored in a locked cupboard / locker.
- If staff have a break time during their working hours, they may use their mobile phones during these times in the staff room or space where children are not present.
- In an emergency, staff needing to make a personal call during a lesson should first obtain agreement from the Principal to ensure that adequate cover has been put in place and make the call in an area not used by children.
- Staff must give the school telephone number to their next of kin in case it is necessary for the staff member to be contacted, in an emergency, during working hours.
- A personal mobile phone may be taken on school trips in accordance with guidance – see 'The Use of Mobile Phones on Trips' section below.
- Camera or video functions on personal mobile phones must not be used by staff to take images of children under any circumstances.
- Staff are not required to make work calls on their own phones, either mobile or landline, however, in exceptional circumstances, if this should be necessary then they are advised to 'hide caller ID' before dialling the recipient's number to ensure their own number is protected.
- Staff must never store parents', carers' or children's telephone numbers on their mobile phones and staff must never give their private mobile number to parents, carers or children.
- Failure by staff to comply with the mobile phone policy guidelines could result in disciplinary action.

Children

- Children who walk to and from school without an accompanying adult may carry a mobile phone for safety. In these cases, children may bring a mobile phone but must deposit it in the locked box / basket in class at the start of the day and collect it at the end of the day.
- Parents and carers need to be aware that whilst there are obvious benefits to pupils having a mobile phone in terms of personal safety there are also some associated risks such as potential for theft, bullying and inappropriate contact, including grooming by unsuitable persons.
- We would also like to alert parents and carers to the risks that using a mobile phone has while walking to and from school. Children who are concentrating on using their phone can have reduced general safety awareness which may result in road accidents and/or injury if a child is not paying attention to their surroundings.

- Mobile phones deposited in school by children will be kept safely in a locked cupboard. Whilst the school will take every reasonable care, it accepts no responsibility whatsoever for theft, loss, damage or health effects (potential or actual) relating to mobile phones. It is the responsibility of parents and carers to ensure mobile phones are properly insured. It is recommended that pupil's phones are security marked and password protected.
- Any mobile phones discovered to have been brought into the school and not handed in will be confiscated immediately. Parents or carers will be asked to collect the mobile phone from the school office.
- Children are not allowed to carry mobile phones on any school trips.
- If a member of the staff has any suspicion that a mobile phone brought into school by a pupil has unsuitable material stored on it, the pupil will be required to hand over the phone immediately to a member of staff and parents or carers will be asked to collect it from a member of the senior leadership team. In circumstances where there is a suspicion that the material on the mobile phone may provide evidence relating to a criminal offence the phone will be handed over to the school's safeguarding lead or to the Principal for further investigation and the parent or carer asked to collect it from them.

Visitors, Parents and Carers

- We ask all parents not to use mobile phones in the school from 9am until 3.20pm. This includes all uses including, texting and photographing.
- Visitors and supply staff are not allowed to use mobile phones on the school property and phones must be kept in their bags. Mobile phones can be used in the staff room.
- If a visitor, parent or carer is seen using their mobile phone, they will be asked politely to turn it off/desist from using it/remove it from children's view.
- It is recognised that many parents and carers use their mobile phone as a camera/video device to record their child at special performances e.g. class assemblies, concerts, etc. On these occasions the use of a phone is permitted for photographing/videoing only; images should only be taken by parents and carers if they include their own child and that the use of these images is for their own personal use and must not be uploaded for any internet use including Facebook or any other social networking sites or used in any form of publication unless they are solely of their own child.
- The school that children may inadvertently be included in photographs by another parent; the school, therefore, are obliged to warn parents and carers of the legal and safeguarding risks of publishing such photographs on any platform. The placing of any photographs of children on social media is dangerous and parents may be in breach of the Data Protection Act if they upload photos of other children without the explicit consent of that child's parents.

The Use of Mobile Phones on School Trips

Carrying mobile phones on trips can help to ensure safety for all members of the school. However, it is important that the following guidance is adhered to in order to keep children safe and protect staff and volunteers from accusations of inappropriate use:

- The party leader should carry a mobile phone for use in contacting other staff members or volunteers on the trip, contacting the campus or contacting the emergency services. If the office mobile phone is unavailable (e.g. if another trip is on the same day) then the party leader should follow the advice below for staff use of personal mobile phones.
- Members of staff and volunteers may carry their own, personal mobile phones within the following guidelines:
- Personal phones should only be used to contact staff members or volunteers on the trip, the school or emergency services. If possible, these calls should be made away from children.
- Personal phones should not be used for any purpose other than school business for the duration of a trip. This means that personal calls or texts should not be made or accepted. On residential trips this will apply while the member of staff or volunteer is on duty. Staff and volunteers should ensure that next of kin are provided with the school number so that in an emergency the school is contacted and will make contact with the relevant person through the party leader.
- If it becomes necessary for a member of staff or volunteer to make a personal call or text, then the party leader or another member of staff should be informed and take responsibility for the pupils in the group while the call or text is made away from sight and sound of any pupils.
- Personal mobile phones must not be used under any circumstances to take photographs or videos of pupils. Volunteers are acting role models for the duration of the trip and therefore must not take photos

or videos of any pupils, including their own child, using a mobile phone or any other mobile device, e.g. camera or tablet, without the express permission of the party leader. Volunteers may be asked to take photographs of their group using a school device – this must be passed back to the party leader at the end of the trip.

- The party leader may ask volunteers to provide them with their mobile phone number for the duration of the trip so that they can be contacted in case of emergency. The party leader undertakes to ensure that these numbers or not held on any mobile device or in any written form after the end of the trip.
- It is advised that if the party leader is using his or her own mobile phone, then if they need to contact anyone during the trip they block caller ID so that their own number remains protected.

Appendix 1 provides guidance for volunteers on trips.

Appendix 1

Use of mobile phones - guidance for volunteers on school trip

Thank you for volunteering to help on our trip. During the trip we ask that you follow the guidelines below in accordance with the school's mobile phone policy:

- Personal phones should only be used to contact staff members or volunteers on the trip, the school or emergency services. If possible these calls should be made away from pupils.
- Personal phones must not be used for any purpose other than school business for the duration of a day trip. On residential trips this will apply while the member of staff or volunteer is on duty. This means that personal calls or texts must not be made or accepted. Staff and volunteers should ensure that next of kin are provided with the school number so that in an emergency the school is contacted and will make contact with the relevant person through the party leader.
- If it becomes necessary for a member of staff or volunteer to make a personal call, then the party leader or another member of staff should be informed and take responsibility for the pupils in the group while the call or text is made away from sight and sound of any pupils.
- Personal mobile phones must not be used under any circumstance to take photographs or videos of pupils. Volunteers are asked to set an example for the duration of the trip and therefore must not take photos or videos of any pupils, including their own child, using a mobile phone or any other mobile device, e.g. cameras or ipads, without the express permission of the party leader. Volunteers may be asked to take photographs of their group using a school device – this must be passed back to the party leader at the end of the trip.
- The party leader may ask volunteers to provide them with their mobile phone number for the duration of the trip so that they can be contacted in case of emergency. The party leader undertakes to ensure that these numbers or not held on any mobile device or in any written form after the end of the trip.
- It is advised that if the party leader is using her or his own mobile phone, then if they need to contact anyone during the trip block caller ID so that their own number remains protected.
- If you have any questions regarding these guidelines please speak to the party leader.
- Thank you for your support and co-operation to ensure the safety of all the pupils.