Policy Information Sheet

Name of Policy:	**Mobile Phone Policy**
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Introduction

At Hartlepool Free School, we prioritize the safety, wellbeing, and academic focus of all our students. We recognise the role that mobile phones play in communication and safeguarding but also understand the potential challenges they present in a school environment, especially for students with Social, Emotional, and Mental Health (SEMH) needs.

In line with the **latest guidance from the Secretary of State for Education** and the **Department for Education's 2026 policy** on mobile phone use in schools, Hartlepool Free School has adopted a **mobile phone-free** policy during school hours. This policy reflects the government's recommendations on mobile phone use in schools and is designed to reduce distractions, improve focus, and safeguard student wellbeing.

1. General Guidelines

- **Mobile Phones on School Premises**:
  In alignment with the **Secretary of State's direction**, students are **not allowed to bring mobile phones to school** unless their parents have given explicit consent. For those who do bring phones, the following arrangements apply:
  - **Option 1: No Mobile Phones**
    Parents may choose for their child **not to bring a mobile phone to school**. This approach fully supports a phone-free environment and ensures students are not distracted by personal devices during school hours.
  - **Option 2: Mobile Phones Collected on Arrival**
    Parents who consent to their child bringing a mobile phone to school must agree that the phone will be **handed in upon arrival**. The phone will be securely stored and **returned at the end of the school day**. This ensures phones are only used outside of school hours, minimising the risk of distraction and maintaining a focus on learning during school time.

A form is to be completed for either option (Appendix 1).

2. Procedures for Mobile Phone Use

- **Primary School (KS1 & KS2)**:
  - **No Mobile Phones Allowed**: In the case of primary school children, parents must make arrangements for any communication outside of school hours directly with the school office. Mobile phones must be **handed in at the start of the day** to a designated staff member and will be **returned at the end of the school day**. Parents must complete the form requesting that pupils have their phone with them on the way to and from school.
- **Secondary School (KS3 & KS4)**:
  - **Hand in on Arrival**: If parents have consented to their child bringing a mobile phone, it must be handed in to a designated staff member upon arrival at school.

Parents must complete the form requesting pupils have their phones on the way to and from school.
    - **Phone Usage**: Phones will not be permitted for use during the school day, including during break times, lunchtime, during trips or in lessons. The phones will be securely stored and returned at the end of the school day for safe use on the way home.

3. Special Considerations for SEMH Students

- **Individualised Arrangements**:
    - For students with SEMH needs, there may be **special provisions** regarding the use of mobile phones to assist in managing emotional regulation. These arrangements must be discussed and agreed with the school leadership and tailored to the specific needs of the student.
- **Support for Crisis Management**:
    - Students who are experiencing heightened distress may be allowed to use school phones in an office to contact a trusted adult or family member. However, this use will always be **supervised by a member of staff** to ensure it is appropriate and supports the student's wellbeing.

4. Consequences for Misuse

- **First Offense**:
    - The phone will be **confiscated** for the remainder of the school day. The student will be reminded of the school policy and the reasons behind it.
- **Repeated Offenses**:
    - If a student repeatedly violates the mobile phone policy, the phone will be confiscated for longer periods, and **parents/carers will be contacted** to arrange for the return of the device.
    - Continued misuse may lead to a **behaviour plan** for the student, or the student may be asked to **not bring a mobile phone to school** at all.
- **Serious Misuse (e.g., Cyberbullying, Inappropriate Content)**:
    - If a student uses their mobile phone for **cyberbullying**, **inappropriate filming**, or any form of harassment, the **serious consequences** will be applied. This may involve suspension, exclusion, and a review of the student's access to mobile phones at school.

5. Parental Responsibility

- **Monitoring Mobile Use**:
    - Parents are encouraged to monitor and guide their child's use of mobile phones both **inside and outside of school**. Parents should ensure their child understands the importance of not using mobile phones for harmful or distracting purposes.

- **Communication During School Hours**:
    - **Emergency Contact**: If parents need to contact their child during school hours, they should do so via the **school office**. Students should not be contacted directly by parents during the school day.
- **Consent for Mobile Phones**:
    - Parents must sign a consent form if they wish for their child to bring a mobile phone to school. The form will outline the rules and expectations, and parents must agree that the phone will be **handed in upon arrival** and returned at the end of the school day.

Supporting Safe Mobile Phone and Social Media Use at Home

*We strongly encourage parents and carers to consider the wider risks associated with mobile phone and social media use. Many popular platforms, such as Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat and WhatsApp, have a **minimum age requirement of 13**. We advise parents to carefully consider whether their child is developmentally ready to access these platforms and to delay use wherever possible.*

Social media platforms are designed to maximise engagement and are not specifically developed with the needs of children and young people in mind. For pupils, particularly those with SEMH needs, use of social media can:

- *Increase anxiety and emotional dysregulation*
- *Contribute to peer conflict, including incidents that carry over into school*
- *Expose children to safeguarding risks, including contact from unknown individuals or harmful content*

We encourage parents to:

- *Monitor and supervise their child's online activity*
- *Set clear boundaries around phone and app use*
- *Have regular conversations about online safety and respectful behaviour*

Further guidance and support for parents is available from:

- *NSPCC (online safety advice and helplines)*
- *Internet Matters (parent guides and controls)*
- *Childnet (resources for families)*

6. Mobile Phone Acceptable Use Agreement

- **Agreement**:
  All students, parents, and carers will be required to read and sign the **Mobile Phone Acceptable Use Agreement** (Appendix 1) at the start of each school year. This

agreement ensures all parties are clear about the school's expectations, the procedures in place, and the consequences for any misuse of mobile phones.

7. Review of Policy

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure it is in line with the latest **Department for Education guidelines** and **Secretary of State for Education** recommendations. It will also be reviewed based on feedback from staff, students, and parents, and adjusted as needed to meet the needs of the school community.

Conclusion

In response to the **latest guidance** from the **Secretary of State for Education** and the **Department for Education's 2026 recommendations**, Hartlepool Free School has implemented a **mobile phone-free policy** during school hours, except where parents have consented to their child bringing a phone. Phones will be stored safely and returned at the end of the day, where parents have requested this using, the form provided. Otherwise, we encourage mobile phones to be left at home. This approach minimizes distractions, ensures focus, and supports our commitment to student wellbeing.

Appendix 1

Mobile Phone Consent & Agreement Form (Parents/Carers)

Student Details

Student Name: _____

Section 1: Mobile Phone Permission

☐ Option 1: No Mobile Phone
I do not give permission for my child to bring a mobile phone to school.

☐ Option 2: Mobile Phone Allowed (Hand-In Required)
I give permission for my child to bring a mobile phone to school on the understanding that it will be handed in on arrival and returned at the end of the school day.

Section 2: Agreement to School Procedures

☐ I have read and agree to the policy

Section 3: SEMH & Special Arrangements

☐ I would like to discuss individual arrangements but understand that until a discussion has taken place my child has to hand in their phone on arrival or not bring it to school.

Parent/Carer Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

School Use Only

Received by: _____

Date: _____