



Mobile Phone Policy

September 20206

(New Policy for 2026/27)

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1. Introduction

Northwood School is committed to creating a calm, focused, and inclusive learning environment where every student can thrive. Research and experience show that smartphones can often be a distraction to learning, social interaction, and emotional wellbeing, particularly for younger students. In order to help our Year 7 students settle into secondary school life, build strong face-to-face relationships, and fully engage with learning, we have made the decision to not allow Year 7 students to bring smartphones into school.

This policy is designed to support our students' success, encourage positive habits, and promote a healthy balance between technology use and personal development. It also aligns with the ban on social media for under 16 which will soon come into force.

As a UNICEF Rights Respecting School, this policy supports the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), particularly **Article 3** (the best interests of the child), **Article 19** (protection from harm), **Article 28** (the right to education) and **Article 29** (education that develops every child's potential, respect and responsibility).

2. Rationale

Our decision is grounded in strong evidence and professional experience.

Educators at the school regularly witness the adverse effects that smartphones and social media can have on young people. As a school we recognise the challenges many families face in managing smartphone use at home. This policy reflects our shared responsibility to address these concerns and protect student wellbeing.

Key issues include:

- **Mental Health:** Since 2010, when smartphones and social media became mainstream, there has been a sharp rise in youth mental health concerns, including anxiety, self-harm, and depression. Leading research suggests that this correlation is no coincidence, and that the constant connectivity and pressures of social media are contributing significantly to this trend.
- **Risk of Crime In London:** Children with expensive smartphones are increasingly targeted for theft. These incidents can be highly traumatic and are

preventable by reducing the presence and visibility of high-value devices among students.

- **Addiction and Dependency:** Social media platforms are designed to be addictive. Many children now spend upwards of 6–8 hours daily on their devices, often seeking validation through likes and shares. This pattern of use is detrimental to both academic focus and self-esteem.
- **Exposure to Inappropriate Content:** With unrestricted access to the internet, children are often exposed to harmful content, including pornography and graphic violence, at a very young age. Additionally, they face risks such as online grooming, cyberbullying, and social pressure to behave in ways they would not offline.
- **Reduced Attention Spans:** Extensive smartphone use is altering brain development and impairing children's ability to focus, retain information, and engage in sustained learning. By reducing distractions, we aim to preserve and strengthen students' attention and cognitive skills.
- Implementing this policy is a proactive measure to ensure students grow and learn in a safer, more supportive educational environment.

3. Key requirements for Year 7 students

Year 7 students may bring a mobile phone to school, but it must be a traditional phone that does not have WiFi access such as the Nokia 105, Nokia 110, or IMO Dash. Year 7 students are not permitted to bring smartphones on to the school site.

If a Year 7 student is found with a smartphone on their person it will be confiscated and a parent/carer will be required to collect it after 1 week (5 working days).

Internet-enabled tracker devices, such as Apple, Samsung, Tile or Amazon Tags, are permitted for families who wish to monitor travel to and from school. These must be securely stored in students' bags during the school day.

4. Key Requirements for Year 8–11 students (from September 2025)

From September 2026, students in Years 8 to 11 may continue to bring smartphones to school, acknowledging the practicalities of an immediate policy shift. These devices must be switched off and kept out of sight throughout the school day. Any phone that is seen or heard during school hours will be confiscated. This section of the policy will be reviewed annually.

5. Key Requirements for Sixth Form students (Years 12 & 13)

Sixth Form students may bring and use smartphones in the study rooms and sixth form area to assist with their learning. Phones must not be used in corridors. Phones used against policy rules will be confiscated.

6. How to access social media safely (until ban comes into force)

We recognise that social media is a significant part of young people's lives today. However, we believe that children aged 11 to 12 are not yet ready to safely and responsibly navigate these platforms, many of which have age restrictions they do not meet. Upholding these boundaries is essential to safeguarding their wellbeing and supporting healthy digital development.

As a school, we take seriously our role in educating students about the safe and appropriate use of digital technologies. Through our curriculum, we provide age-appropriate guidance to help students understand the risks and responsibilities of social media and to prepare them for thoughtful, safe engagement as they grow older.

7. Responsibility for Devices

The school cannot accept responsibility for the loss, damage, or theft of any mobile phone brought into school. Students bringing a mobile phone do so at their own risk.

8. Smart watches

Students are not allowed to bring smart watches to school.

9. Usage Expectations

All phones must be switched off and kept out of sight (e.g., in a bag or locker) while on the school premises. Phones must only be switched on after leaving the school site (after the gate) at the end of the day.

Students needing to contact parents during the school day should seek help from the Head of Year, Pastoral Support Team, or report to Student Reception.

10. Students with a medical condition

If a student in Year 7 has a medical condition that requires the use of a smartphone for health monitoring, such as diabetes, parents/guardians must inform the school in advance. This allows appropriate arrangements to be made to support the student's health needs while maintaining the integrity of the school's mobile phone policy.

11. Consequences for Non-Compliance

Year 7 students found with a smartphone: phone confiscated for 1 week (5 working days). Parents/carers collect after 5 working days.

Year 8 - 11 students found with a smartphone: confiscated until parent/carer collects