

Three Counties Academy Trust



Mobile Devices Policy

#SG45

Last amended 8th September 2026 (v1.0)

Policy lifespan: 3 years. Subject to annual compliance check. Next full review 7th September 2029.

Version history

Date	Version	Details	Actioned by	PDF to Websites	Word to Governor Hub
08.09.26	1.0	Formatted to house style and checked against model for updates	MF	✓	✓

Contents:

Version history

Policy abbreviations and acronyms

Statement of intent

Member, Trustee, Local Governor and Staff Summary

Parent and Pupil Summary

1. Legal framework
2. Roles and responsibilities
3. Ownership and responsibility
4. Acceptable use
5. Unacceptable use
6. Adaptations and reasonable adjustments
7. Cyberbullying
8. Searching pupils
9. Sanctions and confiscation

Monitoring and review

Appendices

A. Sanctions Flowchart

Trust Glossary

Policy Abbreviations and Acronyms

DfE	Department for Education
DSL	Designated Safeguarding Lead
ECHR	European Commission on Human Rights
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IHCP	Individual Healthcare Plan
JCQ	Joint Council for Qualifications
KCSIE	Keeping Children Safe in Education
LA	Local Authority
LADO	Local Authority Designated Officer
MIS	Management Information System
PSHE	Personal, Social, Health and Emotional
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
SLT	Senior Leadership Team
SMSC	Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural
TCAT	Three Counties Academy Trust

NB. Where the term “parent” or “parents” is used this includes those who act as carers or have parental responsibility.

NB. Staff roles noted within this policy may also include those staff performing that role in an ‘Acting’ capacity.

Statement of intent

Three Counties Academy Trust (TCAT) is committed to providing safe, orderly and focused learning environments in which pupils are protected from distraction, disruption and the safeguarding risks associated with unrestricted access to mobile phones and other personal smart or communication-enabled technology.

In accordance with the statutory framework and current Department for Education (DfE) guidance, TCAT schools will operate as mobile phone-free environments throughout the school day. Pupils will not access or use mobile phones or other personal smart or communication-enabled devices during lessons, movement between lessons, breaktimes or lunchtimes, unless a specific exception has been authorised in accordance with this policy.

TCAT recognises that parents may wish their children to carry mobile phones for safety, communication or travel purposes before and after school. This policy does not therefore impose a general prohibition on pupils bringing a mobile phone onto school premises. However, bringing a device to school does not confer any right to access or use it during the school day. Where a device is brought to school, it must be switched off and stored securely in accordance with the individual school's procedures. The default procedure at TCAT schools is that the phone will be handed in at the start of the school day to a designated member of staff at a designated location, and similarly collected at the end of the day.

TCAT recognises its legal obligations towards individual pupils, including its duties under the Equality Act 2010 and in relation to pupils with medical conditions and SEND. Appropriate reasonable adjustments and other individual exceptions will therefore be made where required. Any ongoing exception to the normal prohibition on accessing or using a personal device during the school day may only be authorised by the Headteacher or Head of School and will be limited to the specific purpose, circumstances, times and locations for which it has been agreed.

The restrictions established by this policy are intended to:

- Protect teaching and learning from distraction and disruption
- Promote positive behaviour, concentration and engagement
- Reduce opportunities for bullying, cyberbullying and harmful online behaviour during the school day
- Reduce safeguarding risks associated with inappropriate photography, filming, recording, messaging and online activity
- Protect the privacy and dignity of pupils and staff
- Reduce opportunities to access inappropriate or harmful online content

- Support positive face-to-face interaction and pupils' wellbeing
- Establish clear, consistent and enforceable expectations across TCAT schools

Pupils are required to fully comply with this policy and with lawful instructions given by authorised members of staff concerning mobile phones and other personal devices. Where an authorised member of staff lawfully requires a device to be surrendered, the pupil is required to comply without delay. Refusal to comply with a lawful instruction will be addressed in accordance with this policy and the school's Behaviour Policy.

For the purposes of this policy, personal electronic devices include mobile phones and other personally owned devices capable of communication, internet access, photography, recording, storing or transmitting information. These include, but are not limited to:

- Mobile phones and smartphones
- Smartwatches and other wearable communication devices
- Tablets and similar portable smart devices
- Handheld gaming and entertainment devices
- Personal audio or recording devices
- Smart glasses and other wearable technology capable of recording, communicating or accessing information
- Any other personal device capable of internet access, messaging, image or sound capture, recording, data storage or electronic communication

Compliance with this policy is mandatory. Breaches may result in confiscation and/or disciplinary action in accordance with the school's Behaviour Policy. Safeguarding concerns arising from the possession or use of a device will be dealt with in accordance with the TCAT's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedures.

Member, Trustee, Local Governor and Staff Summary

Purpose of the Policy

- Establishes a consistent Trust-wide approach to the use of mobile phones and other personal smart devices by pupils during the school day
- Supports TCAT schools in maintaining mobile phone-free learning environments
- Reduces distraction, disruption and safeguarding risks associated with personal technology
- Promotes positive behaviour, concentration, wellbeing and face-to-face interaction
- Sets clear expectations regarding possession, storage, use, confiscation and searching of devices

Strategic Assurance

- The policy aligns with current legislation, statutory guidance and Department for Education expectations regarding mobile devices in schools
- Schools are expected to operate as mobile phone-free environments throughout the school day
- Pupils may bring devices to school where permitted by local arrangements, but this does not provide a right to access or use them during the school day
- Appropriate reasonable adjustments and authorised exceptions are available where required for disability, medical or safeguarding reasons

Governance Responsibilities

- Trustees and Local Governors provide strategic oversight of implementation
- Governance bodies monitor consistency, effectiveness and compliance across schools
- Schools must ensure arrangements comply with safeguarding duties, equality legislation and statutory guidance
- Governing bodies receive assurance that suitable arrangements exist for pupils requiring authorised exceptions
- Significant safeguarding, behaviour or equality issues arising from device misuse should be monitored and reviewed
- Policy effectiveness should be regularly evaluated and updated when necessary

Leadership Responsibilities

- Executive Headteachers, Headteachers and Heads of School are responsible for implementing and enforcing the policy
- Schools must establish clear procedures for storage, confiscation, retention and return of devices
- Leaders authorise and review any ongoing exceptions to normal restrictions
- Schools must communicate expectations clearly to pupils, parents and staff
- Safeguarding concerns linked to mobile devices must be managed through established safeguarding procedures
- Significant or recurring issues are reported to the CEO, Local Governing Bodies and the Trust Board

Safeguarding Arrangements

- Safeguarding remains central to all decision making relating to mobile devices
- Concerns involving cyberbullying, sexual harassment, intimate images, upskirting, harmful online behaviour or potential criminal activity are managed through safeguarding procedures
- Staff must not independently view, copy, share or delete safeguarding-related imagery
- Designated Safeguarding Leads coordinate referrals to external agencies where necessary
- Welfare and protection of pupils take priority where safeguarding concerns arise

Expectations for Staff

- Apply the policy consistently, fairly and proportionately
- Reinforce expectations that pupils do not access or use personal devices during the school day unless an authorised exception applies
- Follow agreed procedures when requesting the surrender or confiscation of devices
- Report safeguarding concerns immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead
- Use only approved TCAT systems when communicating electronically with pupils
- Model professional and appropriate use of personal devices
- Record breaches, confiscations and relevant actions in line with school procedures

Reasonable Adjustments and Exceptions

- Exceptions may be authorised only by the Headteacher or Head of School
- Adjustments may be made for disability, SEND, medical conditions or exceptional safeguarding and welfare needs
- Approved access is limited to the specific purpose, time and location authorised
- Exceptions are individually assessed, recorded, communicated and reviewed where appropriate
- Temporary access may be permitted during unforeseen medical, safeguarding or emergency situations

Searching, Confiscation and Enforcement

- Schools may search for devices where lawful and justified
- Devices may be confiscated where pupils breach policy requirements
- Searches and examinations of data must be lawful, necessary and proportionate
- Staff must follow TCAT searching, screening and confiscation procedures
- Confiscation does not automatically permit access to a device's contents
- Repeated or serious breaches may result in escalation and additional sanctions through Behaviour Policy procedures

Parent and Pupil Summary

Why this policy exists

TCAT schools operate as mobile phone-free environments during the school day. The aim is to reduce distraction, improve learning, support wellbeing, minimise cyberbullying and online risks, and protect the safety and privacy of pupils and staff.

What parents are expected to do

- Support their school's mobile phone-free approach and reinforce expectations at home
- Ensure children understand that bringing a phone to school does not mean they can use it during the school day
- Encourage children to switch devices off and store them securely in accordance with school procedures
- Use normal school communication systems if information needs to be passed to a child during the school day
- Support staff where a device has been confiscated following a breach of the policy
- Inform the school if a child has a disability, medical condition or exceptional circumstance that may require authorised access to a device during the school day
- Work with the school where concerns arise relating to cyberbullying, online behaviour or safeguarding matters involving a device

What pupils must do

- Follow the mobile phone-free rules throughout the school day
- Keep mobile phones, smartwatches and other personal smart devices switched off and stored securely unless an authorised exception applies
- Comply immediately with lawful instructions from staff regarding devices
- Hand over a device when requested by an authorised member of staff
- Use devices responsibly before and after school and in a manner consistent with school expectations
- Respect the privacy, dignity and safety of others when using technology
- Report cyberbullying, harmful online behaviour or safeguarding concerns to a trusted adult or member of staff
- Follow any conditions attached to an authorised exception for medical, SEND or other approved reasons

What pupils must not do

- Access or use mobile phones during lessons, movement between lessons, breaktimes or lunchtimes unless authorised
- Refuse to surrender a device when lawfully instructed to do so
- Photograph, film or record others without permission
- Use devices to bully, harass, intimidate or harm others online
- Access, create, store or share inappropriate, indecent, threatening or offensive content
- Use devices in toilets, changing rooms or other areas where privacy may be compromised
- Attempt to bypass school filtering, monitoring or network security arrangements
- Use personal communication channels to contact staff or other pupils inappropriately

Consequences of not following the policy

- Devices may be confiscated in accordance with the Sanctions Flowchart and the Behaviour Policy
- Additional sanctions may be applied where appropriate and proportionate
- Serious incidents involving safeguarding concerns, bullying, inappropriate imagery or potential criminal behaviour may be referred to the DSL, external agencies or the police where necessary

1. Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance and good practice including, but not limited to, the following:

- [DfE 'Mobile phones in schools'](#)
- [DfE 'Communicating your policy for prohibiting the use of mobile phones in schools to parents'](#)
- [DfE 'Behaviour in Schools'](#)
- [DfE 'Keeping children safe in education'](#)
- [DfE 'Searching, screening and confiscation at school'](#)
- [Data Protection Act 2018](#)
- [The UK General Data Protection Regulation \(UK GDPR\)](#)
- [Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026](#)
- [Voyeurism \(Offences\) Act 2019](#)
- [Protection of Children Act 1978](#)
- [Sexual Offences Act 2003](#)

Where legislation has been passed or updated during the shelf life of this policy, we will always apply the latest version available irrespective of the version quoted here.

This policy operates in conjunction with the following policies:

- Behaviour Policy
- Records Management Policy (FI2)
- Data Protection Policy (FI20)
- Lost Property and Liability Policy (GN6)
- Complaints Policy and Procedure (GN9)
- Staff Code of Conduct (HR26)
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedures (SG1)
- Child-on-Child Abuse Policy (SG10)

- Anti-Bullying Policy (SG19)
- Social Media Policy (SG24)
- Searching, Screening and Confiscation Policy (SG25)
- Online Safety Policy (SG43)
- Sharing Nudes and Semi-Nudes Policy (SG44)

Central TCAT policies have the policy number identified, e.g. "SG1". Where no policy number is identified this indicates the policy is a school specific policy available from an individual TCAT school's website.

2. Roles and responsibilities

The Trust Board, and where delegated, Local Governing Bodies will be responsible for:

- Approving this policy and maintaining strategic oversight of its implementation across TCAT schools
- Ensuring that the policy reflects current legislation, statutory guidance and relevant Department for Education guidance concerning mobile phones and other personal electronic devices in schools
- Monitoring the effective and consistent implementation of the policy, including the effectiveness of arrangements for restricting pupils' access to mobile phones and other personal smart or communication-enabled devices throughout the school day
- Holding Headteachers and Heads of School to account for the effective implementation and enforcement of the policy within their schools
- Ensuring that the policy and its implementation comply with the Equality Act 2010 and that appropriate reasonable adjustments are made for disabled pupils where required
- Receiving appropriate assurance that arrangements are in place for pupils with medical conditions, SEND or other circumstances requiring an authorised exception
- Monitoring, where appropriate, significant or recurring issues arising from breaches of the policy, including safeguarding, behaviour and equality considerations
- Evaluating the overall effectiveness of the policy and determining whether amendments are required
- Reviewing the policy in line with the agreed timescales as publish in the 'Monitoring and review' section of this policy, and sooner where there are significant changes to legislation, statutory guidance or relevant DfE guidance

Executive Headteachers, Headteachers and where delegated, Heads of School will be responsible for:

- Ensuring the effective day-to-day implementation and consistent enforcement of this policy within their school
- Establishing and communicating clear school-level procedures for achieving and maintaining a mobile phone-free environment throughout the school day, including arrangements for the secure storage, confiscation, retention and return of devices
- Ensuring that pupils, parents, staff and the wider school community understand the expectations established by this policy, including which personal devices may be brought onto school premises and the restrictions that apply to their access and use
- Ensuring that relevant staff understand their responsibilities and are confident in applying the policy consistently, including the procedures for requesting the surrender and confiscation of devices and responding to refusal or repeated non-compliance
- Authorising any ongoing exception to the prohibition on pupils accessing or using personal mobile devices during the school day, including reasonable adjustments, medical arrangements and other exceptional individual circumstances
- Ensuring that authorised exceptions are necessary, proportionate, appropriately recorded, communicated to relevant staff and reviewed where appropriate
- Ensuring that reasonable adjustments are made where required by the Equality Act 2010 and that the policy is implemented appropriately for pupils with SEND, medical conditions or other relevant individual needs
- Ensuring appropriate arrangements are in place for pupils who require access to a device for an authorised medical purpose, including alignment with an Individual Healthcare Plan where applicable
- Ensuring that safeguarding concerns arising from the possession, use, search or confiscation of a device are referred to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and managed in accordance with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedures
- Monitoring the implementation and effectiveness of the policy, including patterns of non-compliance, repeated confiscations, sanctions and authorised exceptions, and taking action where concerns or inconsistencies are identified
- Reporting significant or recurring issues to the CEO and the appropriate Local Governing Body
- Handling complaints concerning the application of this policy in accordance with TCAT's Complaints Policy and Procedure

The DSL will be responsible for:

- Taking the lead safeguarding role where the possession or use of a mobile phone or other personal electronic device gives rise to a safeguarding concern

- Coordinating their school's response to incidents involving upskirting, non-consensual recording, sexual harassment, sharing of intimate images, cyberbullying or other harmful or abusive use of technology, in accordance with TCAT's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedures
- Ensuring that incidents involving intimate images are managed in accordance with current safeguarding guidance, including ensuring that staff do not unnecessarily view, copy, print, share, store or delete potentially illegal or safeguarding-related imagery
- Advising staff where a confiscated or seized device may contain safeguarding material, evidence of an offence or other sensitive information, including whether the device or its contents should be examined, preserved or referred to another agency
- Ensuring that the welfare and safeguarding needs of all pupils involved in an incident are considered, including the needs of any victim and any pupil alleged to have caused harm
- Considering and, where appropriate, coordinating referrals to children's social care, the police or other relevant agencies in accordance with TCAT's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedures and current statutory guidance
- Ensuring that safeguarding incidents involving personal electronic devices are appropriately recorded and that relevant information is shared with those who need to know in accordance with safeguarding and data protection requirements
- Working with their Headteacher or Head of School where a safeguarding concern arising from the use of a device also requires consideration under their Behaviour Policy

Where in post, Social Inclusion Mentors will be responsible for:

- Supporting the consistent day-to-day implementation of this policy and reinforcing their school's expectations concerning mobile phones and other personal electronic devices
- Supporting pupils to understand the requirements of the policy and the consequences of non-compliance
- Supporting staff in responding to breaches of the policy, including repeated refusal to surrender a device, in accordance with the agreed escalation procedures and school Behaviour Policy
- Where appropriate, making or repeating a request for a pupil to surrender a device and supporting the escalation process where the pupil continues to refuse
- Ensuring that confiscated devices passed into their care are handled and stored securely in accordance with their school's agreed procedures
- Supporting communication with parents where required following breaches of the policy, including repeated non-compliance or confiscation

- Recording behaviour incidents, confiscations and other relevant actions on their school's Management Information System (MIS) in accordance with school procedures
- Supporting pupils following incidents and helping them to understand how they can avoid further breaches of the policy
- Identifying patterns of repeated non-compliance and bringing these to the attention of the Headteacher, Head of School or another appropriate senior leader
- Reporting any safeguarding concern arising from the possession, use or content of a personal electronic device to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) without delay
- Following the direction of the DSL where an incident involves safeguarding material, intimate imagery, suspected criminal activity or other sensitive content, and not independently viewing, copying, deleting or sharing such material

Staff members will be responsible for:

- Applying this policy consistently, fairly and proportionately and reinforcing the expectation that pupils must not access or use mobile phones or other personal smart or communication-enabled devices during the school day unless an authorised exception applies
- Giving clear and reasonable instructions to pupils who breach the policy, including requesting the surrender of a device where confiscation is appropriate
- Following TCAT's agreed escalation procedure where a pupil refuses to surrender a device, including involving a second member of staff where appropriate, rather than entering into prolonged confrontation with the pupil
- Confiscating devices where appropriate and ensuring that confiscated devices are handled and stored securely in accordance with the school's agreed procedures
- Following TCAT's Searching, Screening and Confiscation Policy where there are grounds to search for a device or examine data on a lawfully seized device, and not accessing the contents of a pupil's device merely because it has been confiscated
- Responding to incidents of cyberbullying and other harmful online behaviour in accordance with TCAT's Anti-Bullying Policy, Online Safety Policy, Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedures and their school Behaviour Policy
- Reporting any safeguarding concern arising from the possession, use or content of a device to their Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), or a deputy DSL, without delay
- Not independently viewing, copying, forwarding, sharing or deleting intimate imagery or other suspected illegal or safeguarding-related material and seeking advice from their DSL where such material may be present

- Taking account of any authorised exception, reasonable adjustment, medical requirement or other agreed arrangement applicable to an individual pupil
- Recognising that only their Headteacher or Head of School may authorise an ongoing exception to the normal restrictions established by this policy; staff may permit temporary access where necessary in an immediate and unforeseen medical, safeguarding or emergency situation
- Modelling appropriate use of mobile phones and other personal devices and not using personal devices in front of pupils for private or non-work-related purposes except where there is an emergency or other exceptional reason
- Using only TCAT-approved systems and communication channels when communicating electronically with pupils and not using personal telephone numbers, personal email addresses, personal social-media accounts or other private communication channels
- Supporting pupils to understand the risks associated with mobile phones, smart devices, social media and online activity, where this forms part of their professional or curriculum responsibilities
- Recording breaches, confiscations and other actions in accordance with their school's Behaviour Policy and agreed recording procedures

Pupils are responsible for adhering to the provisions outlined in this policy.

3. Ownership and responsibility

Personal mobile devices are brought onto TCAT premises, taken on school visits or activities, and carried when travelling to and from school at the owner's risk. Pupils are responsible for taking reasonable care of their own belongings.

TCAT will not ordinarily accept responsibility for the loss, theft or accidental damage of personal mobile devices or other personal property, except where responsibility arises as a matter of law. Pupils and parents are therefore advised to consider carefully whether it is necessary for valuable personal devices to be brought onto school premises.

The possession of a personal mobile device on school premises does not give a pupil the right to access or use that device during the school day. Pupils must comply with the arrangements set out elsewhere in this policy concerning the possession, storage and use of mobile phones and other smart or communication-enabled technology. These arrangements will reflect the statutory DfE guidance on mobile phones in schools.

Where a personal device is lawfully confiscated as a disciplinary sanction, it will be handled and stored with reasonable care and in accordance with the school's behaviour procedures. Section 94 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 provides protection from liability in proceedings concerning the seizure, retention, disposal, loss of or damage to an item where the member of staff has acted lawfully.

Pupils are expected to take reasonable care of TCAT-owned devices and other school property entrusted to them. Deliberate or reckless loss, theft, misuse or damage may result in disciplinary action and, where appropriate and lawful, TCAT may seek reimbursement for the loss or damage.

Pupils and staff who are permitted to bring personal devices onto TCAT premises should protect them against unauthorised access by using an appropriate PIN, password, passcode or, where available and chosen by the individual, biometric security. Individuals should take reasonable precautions to protect personal data, photographs, videos, messages and other information stored on their devices if a device is lost, stolen or accessed without permission.

4. Acceptable use

Where pupils bring a mobile phone or other personal smart or communication-enabled device onto school premises, they should do so with the knowledge of their parents. Bringing such a device to school does not give a pupil permission to access or use it during the school day.

TCAT schools will operate as mobile phone-free environments by default. Pupils must not access or use mobile phones or other personal smart or communication-enabled devices with similar functionality at any point during the school day, including during lessons, movement between lessons, breaktimes and lunchtimes.

Exceptions will only be permitted where agreed by the Headteacher or Head of School for a specific and justified reason. This may include a reasonable adjustment for a disabled pupil, support for a medical condition, or another exceptional circumstance relating to an individual pupil.

Where an exception is agreed, access to or use of the device will be limited to the specific purpose, times and locations authorised by the school and will be subject to any conditions considered necessary. An agreed exception does not provide general permission for the pupil to use the device during the school day.

5. Unacceptable use

Pupils are encouraged not to bring mobile phones or other personal smart or communication-enabled devices to school unless they are required for travel to and from school or for another legitimate reason.

Where such devices are brought onto TCAT premises, they must be switched off and stored securely in accordance with the individual school's procedures from the beginning until the end of the school day. Devices must not be seen, heard, accessed or used during this period unless an agreed exception applies.

Where an exception has been agreed for an individual pupil by the Headteacher or Head of School, including as a reasonable adjustment, for a medical need or because of another exceptional circumstance, use will be limited strictly to the purpose, times and locations specified in the agreed arrangements. An exception does not provide general permission to access or use a device during the school day.

TCAT recognises that pupils may need access to a mobile phone when travelling independently to and from school. Schools will consider any particular safety or accessibility concerns raised by pupils or parents and, where appropriate, agree suitable arrangements. During the school day, pupils who need to contact their parents, including in relation to illness or changes to travel arrangements, must normally do so through the school's established procedures rather than through a personal device.

Pupils must not use personal devices to photograph, record, film or make an audio recording of another person without permission, or to access, create, store, share or distribute material which is abusive, discriminatory, defamatory, indecent, sexual, threatening, harassing or otherwise contrary to the law or TCAT policies. Any safeguarding concern arising from the use of a device will be dealt with in accordance with TCAT's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedures, Sharing Nude and Semi-Nudes Policy and, where appropriate, the Behaviour Policy.

Personal mobile phones, smartwatches, earbuds, smart glasses and other unauthorised electronic or communication devices must not be taken into or accessed during examinations or assessments except where specifically permitted under the applicable examination or awarding-body regulations or an approved access arrangement. Pupils must comply with current Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) and awarding-body requirements and with the school's examination procedures.

Mobile phones and other personal devices must not be used in toilets, changing rooms or other areas where their use could compromise the privacy or dignity of another person. Taking, attempting to take, viewing or sharing an image or recording in such circumstances may constitute a serious safeguarding matter and/or criminal offence.

Pupils must not use personal devices to circumvent TCAT and their school's filtering and monitoring arrangements, access prohibited content, create an unauthorised network or hotspot, interfere with school IT systems, or transfer files or data in breach of TCAT's ICT, data protection or safeguarding requirements.

Staff must model appropriate use of mobile and smart devices in the presence of pupils. Personal devices should not normally be used by staff in front of pupils except where there is a legitimate professional, operational, emergency or safeguarding reason and their use is consistent with TCAT policies and staff expectations.

Staff must not use personal telephone numbers, personal email addresses, personal social-media accounts or other private communication channels to communicate with pupils. Communication with pupils must take place through TCAT-approved systems and in accordance with the Staff Code of Conduct and other relevant policies.

Staff and pupils must comply with the Social Media Policy and applicable ICT acceptable-use requirements at all times.

Personal devices must not be connected to TCAT networks, systems, equipment or charging facilities except where this has been authorised by the school and is consistent with TCAT's ICT and electrical-safety arrangements.

The use of any device to take a photograph or video beneath a person's clothing without their consent, where the circumstances meet the statutory requirements for the offence commonly known as "upskirting", is a criminal offence. Any suspected incident of upskirting, or other sexualised or non-consensual recording, will be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and managed in accordance with TCAT's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedures and Sharing Nudes and Semi-Nudes Policy, including consideration of referral to the police and/or other agencies where appropriate.

6. Adaptations and reasonable adjustments

TCAT schools will comply with their legal duties, including the duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils under the Equality Act 2010 and duties relating to pupils with medical conditions and SEND. The application of this policy will therefore take account of the individual needs and circumstances of pupils where required.

An exception to the normal prohibition on accessing or using a personal mobile device during the school day may only be authorised by the Headteacher or Head of School. Other members of staff may not independently grant an exception, although they may implement an exception that has been formally agreed.

Where access to a mobile phone or other personal device is necessary as a reasonable adjustment for a disabled pupil, the Headteacher or Head of School will ensure that appropriate arrangements are put in place. The nature and extent of the adjustment will be determined according to the pupil's individual needs and will not provide wider access to a device than is necessary to meet those needs.

Pupils who require access to a mobile phone or other device to manage a medical condition will be provided with appropriate access. This may include, for example, a pupil who uses a mobile phone application to monitor blood glucose levels or to communicate with a medical device. Such arrangements will be reflected, where appropriate, in the pupil's Individual Healthcare Plan (IHCP) or other relevant support plan.

The Headteacher or Head of School may also authorise an exception where there are exceptional individual circumstances and access to a mobile device is considered necessary to support a pupil's safety, welfare or other significant need. This may include, for example, particular circumstances affecting a young carer.

Requests for exceptions will be considered on an individual basis. An exception will not be granted solely for convenience or because a pupil or parent would prefer the pupil to have access to a mobile device during the school day.

Where an exception is authorised, the arrangements will be clearly recorded and communicated to relevant staff, the pupil and, where appropriate, their parents. The agreed arrangements will specify:

- The reason for the exception

- The device or functionality that may be accessed
- The specific purpose for which it may be used
- When and where the device may be accessed or used
- Any supervision or other conditions that apply
- The period for which the exception applies and, where appropriate, when it will be reviewed

Pupils with an authorised exception must use their device strictly in accordance with the agreed arrangements. An exception for one purpose does not provide permission to use the device for any other purpose. Contravention of such an agreement may lead to the agreement being revised or withdrawn.

Where an immediate and unforeseen safeguarding, medical or emergency situation arises, a member of staff may permit temporary access to a device where this is necessary to protect a pupil's health, safety or welfare. This will not constitute an ongoing exception. Any continuing need for access must subsequently be considered and authorised by the Headteacher or Head of School.

7. Cyberbullying

The use of personal mobile phones and other smart or communication-enabled devices must comply with TCAT's Online Safety Policy, Anti-Bullying Policy, Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedures and individual school's Behaviour Policies.

Cyberbullying, online harassment and other harmful online behaviour will not be tolerated. This includes the use of mobile phones, messaging services, social media, online platforms, gaming services or other technology to threaten, intimidate, humiliate, exclude, harass or otherwise cause harm to another person.

Incidents involving cyberbullying or harmful online behaviour will be investigated and responded to in accordance with the relevant TCAT and school policies. Where an incident raises a safeguarding concern, it will be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and managed in accordance with TCAT's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedures.

The school may respond to and, where appropriate, sanction online behaviour that takes place outside school where there is a sufficient connection to the school, including where the behaviour involves another pupil, adversely affects the education or welfare of a member of the

school community, poses a threat to another pupil or member of staff, or could have repercussions for the orderly running or reputation of the school.

Where online behaviour may constitute a criminal offence or presents a significant safeguarding risk, the school will consider whether referral to the police, children's social care or another relevant agency is required.

Pupils will receive age-appropriate education about online safety, respectful online behaviour, cyberbullying and the safe and responsible use of technology through the curriculum, including PSHE and other relevant curriculum areas, and through the school's wider safeguarding and online safety provision.

The fact that an incident occurred using a personal device, outside school premises or outside the school day will not, in itself, prevent the school from taking appropriate safeguarding or disciplinary action.

8. Searching pupils

Pupils have a right to respect for their private and family life under Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). This right is qualified. Any interference with a pupil's privacy when exercising the school's powers of search, examination or confiscation will be lawful, necessary and proportionate and undertaken in accordance with applicable legislation and statutory guidance.

All searches will be conducted in accordance with TCAT's Searching, Screening and Confiscation Policy, the school's Behaviour Policy and the DfE's current Searching, screening and confiscation guidance.

Authorised members of staff may search a pupil or their possessions where they have reasonable grounds to suspect that the pupil is in possession of a prohibited item specified in legislation or an item identified in the school rules as an item for which a search may be made. Mobile phones and similar personal smart or communication-enabled devices are identified by TCAT schools as items which may be searched for where their possession or use is contrary to this policy or the school's Behaviour Policy.

Before conducting a search, the authorised member of staff will normally:

- Assess how urgently the search is required and consider any safeguarding risks to the pupil or others
- Explain to the pupil why a search is being considered and how it will be conducted
- Seek the pupil's cooperation
- Give the pupil an opportunity to ask questions about the search
- Consider the pupil's age, SEND, communication needs and any other relevant individual circumstances

Where a pupil does not cooperate, the authorised member of staff will follow TCAT's Searching, Screening and Confiscation Policy and the applicable statutory guidance. A pupil's refusal to cooperate does not necessarily prevent a search where the law permits a search to be undertaken without consent.

A search of a pupil may extend only to outer clothing, pockets and possessions as permitted by law. A pupil must not be required to remove clothing other than outer clothing. For these purposes, outer clothing means clothing that is not worn wholly next to the skin or immediately over underwear and includes hats, shoes, boots, gloves and scarves. Possessions include goods over which the pupil has or appears to have control, including bags and, subject to the applicable legal requirements, desks and lockers.

Searches will normally be carried out by an authorised member of staff of the same sex as the pupil and in the presence of another member of staff as a witness. Any exception to these requirements will only be made where permitted by law and the DfE's current Searching, screening and confiscation guidance, including where there is a reasonable belief that there is a risk of serious harm if the search is not carried out urgently.

Electronic devices and data

Where an electronic device is lawfully seized, an authorised member of staff may examine data or files on the device where there is a good reason to do so and where this is permitted by law. Any examination must be necessary and proportionate to the circumstances.

A good reason may exist where there are reasonable grounds to suspect that data or files on the device have been, or could be, used to cause harm, disrupt teaching or the safe environment of the school, breach school rules or commit an offence.

Staff will not routinely search through the contents of a pupil's personal device. Where examination of a device may involve safeguarding material, sexual or intimate images, evidence of an offence or other particularly sensitive information, staff will seek advice from the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) before proceeding wherever practicable.

Where there is reason to believe that a device contains self-generated intimate images or videos involving a child, staff must not intentionally view, copy, print, share, forward or otherwise reproduce the imagery unless there is a clear and lawful reason to do so in accordance with current safeguarding guidance. The matter must be referred immediately to the DSL and managed in accordance with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedures and current government guidance.

Where an authorised member of staff lawfully examines data or files on a seized device, they may delete data where there is a good reason to do so and it is lawful and appropriate. Material which may constitute evidence of a criminal offence should not normally be deleted and consideration will be given to preserving the device and referring the matter to the police.

Where a device or its contents give rise to a safeguarding concern, the DSL will be informed without delay.

Confiscation

A mobile phone or other electronic device may be confiscated where this is permitted by law and the school's Behaviour Policy. The school will determine whether the device should be retained, returned to the pupil or parent, or passed to the police or another appropriate agency, having regard to the nature of the item or material found and current statutory guidance.

Where a search identifies material that may constitute evidence of a criminal offence, staff will preserve the material and seek advice from the DSL and/or police as appropriate rather than deleting it.

Stolen items will be dealt with in accordance with the DfE's Searching, screening and confiscation guidance, including consideration of whether they should be delivered to the police or returned to their owner.

A pupil who refuses to cooperate with a lawful search or other reasonable instruction may be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with their school's Behaviour Policy. Any response will take account of the circumstances of the incident and any relevant safeguarding or SEND considerations.

9. Sanctions and confiscation

Breaches of this policy will be addressed in a consistent, fair and proportionate manner and in accordance with the individual TCAT school's Behaviour Policy and the provisions of this policy, including the Sanctions Flowchart in Appendix A. In determining an appropriate response, staff will take account of the nature and seriousness of the breach, any previous or repeated breaches, the pupil's age and individual circumstances, and any relevant SEND, medical needs, reasonable adjustments or authorised exceptions.

Where a pupil uses, accesses, displays or allows a mobile phone or other prohibited personal device to be seen or heard during the school day contrary to this policy, a member of the school SLT and/or where present a Pastoral Support Mentor will follow the procedures as set out in the Sanctions Flowchart. This may lead to the confiscation of such a device depending on the non-cooperation of the pupil.

A confiscated device may be retained for a reasonable and proportionate period. In most cases the device will be returned to the pupil or their parents at the end of the school day in line with the provisions of the Sanctions Flowchart.

Where confiscation would affect a pupil's ability to access a device for an authorised medical, SEND, safeguarding or other agreed purpose, staff will take account of the pupil's agreed arrangements and ensure that any necessary alternative provision is made.

Confiscated devices will be switched off, where practicable, and stored securely in accordance with the individual school's procedures. Access to confiscated devices will be restricted to authorised staff. Confiscation of a device does not, in itself, provide authority to examine its contents; any examination of data or files will only take place in accordance with the powers and procedures set out in the Searching pupils and electronic devices section of this policy.

Additional or alternative sanctions, including detention or other disciplinary measures, will be applied in accordance with the Sanctions Flowchart and school Behaviour Policy. Repeated or serious breaches may result in an escalated response in accordance with the provisions of the Sanctions Flowchart and Behaviour Policy.

Where the circumstances surrounding a breach indicate that a pupil may be suffering, or may be at risk of, harm, staff will follow the school's safeguarding procedures and report the concern to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) without delay. Safeguarding action will take priority over disciplinary action where necessary.

Where use of a device involves bullying or cyberbullying, the matter will also be dealt with in accordance with the Anti-Bullying Policy and the Cyberbullying section of this policy. Where the use of a device may constitute a criminal offence, staff will refer the matter to the DSL and consideration will be given to involvement of the police or other relevant agencies.

Monitoring and review

Lifespan of Policy: 3 Years

At any point this policy is updated or fully reviewed, it will be updated on the main TCAT website and will automatically update on all TCAT school websites simultaneously.

Where an annual check or other check results in minor changes, the Version History will be reviewed and updated with a change in the number following the decimal point, for example, v1.1 ⇒ v1.2. Where the policy is reviewed in full, then the number before the decimal point will change and reset, for example v1.4 ⇒ v2.0.

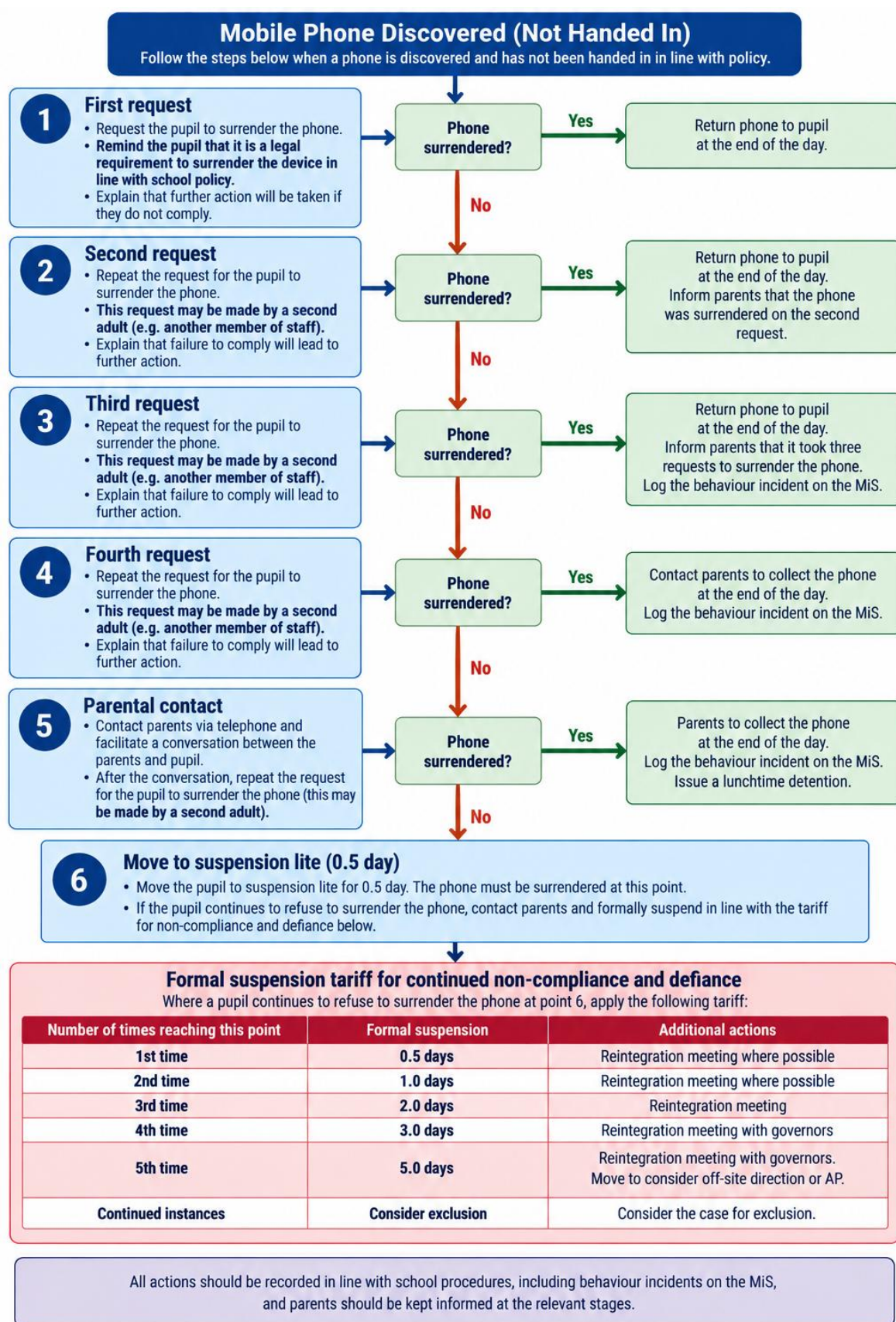
Any changes made by the CEO in collaboration with the Board Appointed Trustee will be passed to the Trust Board for ratification and subsequently be notified to Clerks to Local Governing Bodies and Headteachers/Heads of School.

The next scheduled full review date for this policy is 7th September 2029.

Date approved by the Board Appointed Trustee: 8th September 2026.

To be ratified and recorded in the minutes at the first Trust Board Meeting after 8th September 2026.

Appendix A: Sanctions Flowchart



Trust Glossary

AA	Admissions Authority	H&S	Health and Safety
AAI	Adrenaline Auto-Injector (Epi Pen)	HoS	Head of School
ACM	Asbestos Containing Materials	HSE	Health and Safety Executive
AHT	Assistant Headteacher	ICO	Information Commissioners Office
AIR	Attendance Intervention Reviews	IDSR	Inspection Data Summary Report
APDR	Assess Plan Do Review Cycle	IHP	Individual Healthcare Plan
APIs	Application Programming Interfaces	IRMS	Information and Records Management Society
ASC	Autistic Spectrum Condition	IWF	Internet Watch Foundation
ASP	Analyse School Performance	KCSIE	Keeping Children Safe in Education
ATH	Academy Trust Handbook	KS1/2/3/4	Key Stage 1/2/3/4
BAME	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Backgrounds	LAC	Looked After Child
BAT	Board Appointed Trustee	LADO	Local Authority Designated Officer
BCP	Business Continuity Plan	LGB	Local Governing Body
BFR	Budget Forecast Return	LLC	Low-Level Concerns
CEO	Chief Executive Officer	LSA	Learning Support Assistants
CFO	Chief Financial Officer	MASH	Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub
CIF	Condition Improvement Fund	MAT	Multi-Academy Trust

CIN	Child in Need	MFA	Multi-Factor Authentication
CLA	Children Looked After	MFL	Modern Foreign Language
CMIE	Child Missing in Education	NCSC	National Cyber Security Centre
COO	Chief Operating Officer	NoV	Note of Visit
COSHH	Control of Substances Hazardous to Health	NPQ	National Professional Qualifications
CP	Child Protection	PA	Persistent Absence
CPD	Continuing Professional Development	PAN	Published Admission Number
CPOMS	Child Protection Online Management System	PECR	Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations
CSCS	Children's Social Care Services	PEP	Personal Education Plan
CSE	Child Sexual Exploitation	PEEP	Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan
CTIRU	Counter-Terrorism Internet Referral Unit	PEx	Permanent Exclusion
CWD	Children with Disabilities	PP	Pupil Premium
CYPMHS	Children and Young People's Mental Health Services	PPG	Pupil Premium Grant
DBS	Disclosure and Barring Service	PSHE	Personal, Social and Health Education
DDSL	Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead	PSED	Public Sector Equality Duty
DfE	Department for Education	PTFA	Parent, Teacher and Friends Association
DHT	Deputy Headteacher	QA	Quality Assurance

DSE	Display Screen Equipment	RIDDOR	Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations
DSL	Designated Safeguarding Lead	RHE	Relationships and Health Education
DPO	Data Protection Officer	RPA	Risk Protection Arrangement
EAL	English as an Additional Language	RSHE	Relationships, Sex and Health Education
ECT	Early Career Teacher	SA	Severely Absent
EDIB	Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging	SALT	Speech and Language Therapist
EHA	Early Help Assessment	SARC	Sexual Assault Referral Centre
EHENA	Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment	SBM	School Business Manager
EHCP	Education, Health and Care Plan	SCC	Standard Contractual Clause
EHE	Elective Home Education	SCITT	School-Centred Initial Teacher Training
ELSA	Emotional Literacy Support Assistant	SCR	Single Central Record
ESFA	Education and Skills Funding Agency	SDP	School Development Plan
EVC	Educational Visit Coordinator	SDQ	Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire
EWOSSE	Education Welfare and Safeguarding Support Officer	SEF	Self-Evaluation Form
EYFS	Early Years Foundation Stage	SEMH	Social, Emotional, and Mental Health
FBV	Fundamental British Values	SENCO	Special Educational Needs Coordinator
FFT	Fischer Family Trust	SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

FGM	Female Genital Mutilation	SIP	School Improvement Partner
FGMPO	FGM Protection Order	SLA	Service Level Agreement
FOI	Freedom of Information	SLCN	Speech, Language and Communication Needs
FSM	Free School Meals	SLT	Senior Leadership Team
FTS	Find a Tender Service	SPOC	Single Point of Contact
GAG	General Annual Grant	STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation	TA	Teaching Assistant
GIAS	Get Information about Schools	TAC	Team Around the Child
HASH	Herefordshire Association of Secondary Heads	TCAT	Three Counties Academy Trust
HBA	Honour Based Abuse	TUPE	Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment)
HR	Human Resources	VSH	Virtual School Headteacher