Pupils' Personal Electronic Devices Policy

#SG45

Last amended 14th December 2025

To be reviewed no later than August 31st 2028

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Common abbreviations and acronyms

AA	Admissions Authority	**HASH**	Herefordshire Association of Secondary Heads
AAI	Adrenaline Auto-Injector (Epi Pen)	**HBV**	Honour Based Violence
ACM	Asbestos Containing Materials	**HR**	Human Resources
AFH	Academies Financial Handbook	**H&S**	Health and Safety
AHT	Assistant Headteacher	**HoS**	Head of School
AIR	Attendance Intervention Reviews	**HSE**	Health and Safety Executive
APIs	Application Programme Interfaces	**ICO**	Information Commissioners Office
BAME	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Backgrounds	**IHP**	Individual Healthcare Plan
BCP	Business Continuity Plan	**IRMS**	Information and Records Management Society
BFR	Budget Forecast Return	**IWF**	Internet Watch Foundation
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services	**KCSIE**	Keeping Children Safe in Education
CEO	Chief Executive Officer	**KS1/2/3/4**	Key Stage 1/2/3/4
CFO	Chief Financial Officer	**LAC**	Looked After Child
CIF	Condition Improvement Fund	**LADO**	Local Authority Designated Officer
CIN	Child in Need	**LGB**	Local Governing Body
CLA	Children Looked After	**LLC**	Low-Level Concerns
CMIE	Child Missing in Education	**LSA**	Learning Support Assistants
COO	Chief Operating Officer	**MASH**	Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub

COSHH	Control and Substances Hazardous to Health	**MAT**	Multi-Academy Trust
CP	Child Protection	**MFA**	Multi-Factor Authentication
CPD	Continuing Professional Development	**MFL**	Modern Foreign Language
CSCS	Children's Social Care Services	**NCSC's**	National Cyber Security Centres
CSE	Child Sexual Exploitation	**NPQEL**	National Professional Qualification in Executive Leadership
CTIRU	Counter-Terrorism Internet Referral Unit	**PA**	Persistent Absence
CWD	Children with Disabilities	**PAN**	Published Admission Number
DBS	Disclosure and Barring Service	**PECR**	Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations
DDSL	Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead	**PEP**	Personal Education Plan
DfE	Department for Education	**PEEP**	Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan
DHT	Deputy Headteacher	**PEx**	Permanent Exclusion
DSE	Display Screen Equipment	**PLAC**	Previously Looked After Child
DSL	Designated Safeguarding Lead	**PP**	Pupil Premium
DPO	Data Protection Officer	**PSHE**	Personal, Social and Health Education
EAL	English as an Additional Language	**PSED**	Public Sector Equality Duty
ECT	Early Career Teacher	**PTFA**	Parent, Teacher and Friends Association
EHA	Early Help Assessment	**RIDDOR**	Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations
EHCNA	Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment	**RHE**	Relationships and Health Education

EHCP	Education, Health and Care Plan	**RSHE**	Relationships, Sex and Health Education
EHE	Elective Home Education	**SALT**	Speech and Language Therapist
ELSA	Emotional, Literacy and Support Assistant	**SARC**	Sexual Assault Referral Centre
ESFA	Education and Skills Funding Agency	**SBM**	School Business Manager
EVC	Educational Visit Coordinator	**SCCs**	Standard Contractual Clauses
EWO	Education Welfare and Safeguarding Support Officer	**SDQ**	Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire
EYFS	Early Years Foundation Stage	**SEMH**	Social, Emotional, and Mental Health
FBV	Fundamental British Values	**SENCO**	Special Educational Needs Coordinator
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation	**SEND**	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
FOI	Freedom of Information	**SLA's**	Service Level Agreements
FSM	Free School Meals	**STEM**	Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths
FTS	Find a Tender Service	**TA**	Teaching Assistant
GAG	General Annual Grant	**TCAT**	Three Counties Academy Trust
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation	**VSH**	Virtual School Headteacher
GIAS	Get Information about Schools		
GPA	Government Procurement Arrangement		

Statement of intent

Mobile phones, tablets and other personal electronic devices have become widely available and accessible to pupils.

Three Counties Academy Trust (TCAT) accepts that personal mobile phones and tablets are often given to pupils by their parents to ensure their safety and personal security but understands that such devices pose inherent risks and may jeopardise the learning environment.

As a trust and on behalf of our schools, we must strike a balance between personal safety and a suitable educational setting. We understand that parents may wish for their child to carry a mobile phone for their personal safety, whilst pupils may wish to bring additional devices to school for other reasons. This policy establishes how personal electronic devices should be used by pupils in school to ensure both personal safety and an appropriate learning environment.

Personal electronic devices include, but are not limited to the following items:

- Mobile phones
- Personal digital assistants (PDAs)
- Handheld entertainment systems, e.g. video game consoles, iPods
- Portable internet devices, e.g. tablets, laptops
- Wireless handheld technologies or portable information technology systems, e.g. devices used for word processing, wireless internet access, image capture and/or recording, sound recording, and information transmitting, receiving and/or storing

1. Legal framework

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

- DfE 'Mobile phones in schools'
- 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)
- Voyeurism (Offences) Act 2019
- Protection of Children Act 1978
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- DfE 'Cyberbullying: Advice for headteachers and school staff'

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)
- 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)

2. Roles and responsibilities

The Trust Board working with Local Governing Bodies will be responsible for:

- The implementation of the policy and procedures
- Evaluating the effectiveness of the policy and procedures
- Ensuring that the policy, as written, does not discriminate on any grounds
- Reviewing the policy
- Approving any exceptions to this policy put forward by the Headteacher/Head of School

The Headteacher/Head of School will be responsible for:

- Handling complaints regarding this policy as outlined in TCAT's Complaints Policy and Procedure
- The day-to-day implementation and management of the policy
- Informing parents and pupils of the Personal Electronic Devices Agreement for their school
- Communicating this policy to the relevant staff members and their wider school community
- Communicating what devices can be brought to their school and when they can and cannot be used

Staff members will be responsible for:

- Negotiating incidents of cyberbullying in conjunction with the Headteacher/Head of School, in line with the Anti-Bullying Policy and the Behaviour Policy

The DSL will be responsible for:

- Initiating and managing responses to incidents of upskirting with relevant staff members and in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedures
- Liaising with and reporting the relevant information to children's social care and/or the police, when it is necessary to do so

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

3. Ownership and responsibility

Pupils are responsible for their own belongings. TCAT and our schools accept no responsibility for replacing property that is lost, stolen or damaged either on school premises or travelling to and from school, and at school events, unless a member of staff has accepted the item for safekeeping, e.g. in the changing rooms.

Staff will be protected against liability in any proceedings brought against them for any loss or damage to personal devices that have been confiscated as an appropriate sanction, provided that they have acted lawfully.

Pupils are responsible for replacing TCAT property they lose, damage or steal, including electronic devices.

Pupils and staff should enable a personal PIN or passcode on all the devices they bring to school to protect their personal data, images and videos in the event that the device is lost, stolen or accessed by an unauthorised person.

4. Acceptable use

Pupils bringing personal electronic devices into school must make their parents aware of this.

Personal electronic devices will be switched off and handed in as required during lessons. Any exceptions to this will be communicated by the Headteacher/Head of School after discussion with the Local Governing Body.

All TCAT schools will make reasonable adjustments for pupils to use their mobile phones in specific circumstances, e.g. to monitor a medical condition via an app or if they are a young carer.

Pupils may use a portable flash drive to transfer schoolwork from the school premises to their home providing the flash drive has first been checked by the ICT Technician. All staff members will adhere to TCATs Data Protection Policy when sending work home with pupils.

5. Unacceptable use

Personal electronic devices will not be used in any manner or place that is disruptive to the normal routine of the school. Unless express permission is granted by a member of staff or the individual school rules apply, mobile devices will not be used to perform any of the following activities whilst on school grounds:

- Make phone or video calls

- Send text messages, WhatsApp messages, iMessages or emails
- Access social media
- Play games
- Watch videos
- Take photographs or videos
- Use any other application during school lessons and other educational and pastoral activities

Pupils will not be permitted to use their mobile phones throughout the course of the school day unless already mandated as part of the individual school rules – this will include in between lessons and during break and lunchtimes. The school will, however, consider the risks that may be posed to pupils who do not have access to their mobile phone, e.g. when organising travel home at the end of the school day in formulating their individual rules.

Staff members will also not be permitted to use their mobile phone for personal reasons in front of pupils throughout the school day. They will be permitted to use TCAT issued devices, e.g. to access systems, registers etc.

Staff and pupils will adhere to the Social Media Policy at all times.

Files will not be sent between mobile devices, and Bluetooth and Wi-Fi functions will be disabled while on TCAT premises.

If a pupil becomes unwell during school hours, they will follow the agreed school procedure rather than contacting their parents using their mobile phone.

Under no circumstances will personal electronic devices be taken into examinations. Devices will be kept in bags or lockers or handed to a member of staff for safekeeping during the examination. Under no circumstances will mobile devices be used in changing rooms or toilets.

Personal electronic devices will not be plugged into outlets on the school premises without the express permission of a senior leader, and they will have an up-to-date portable appliance test (PAT).

Staff will not give out their personal contact details to pupils. If correspondence is needed between staff members and pupils for homework or exams, staff should provide their school contact details.

Under the Voyeurism (Offences) Act 2019, the act known as "upskirting" is an offence. Any incidents will not be tolerated by TCAT or our schools. Despite the name, anyone (including both pupils and teachers) of any gender, can be a victim of upskirting.

A "specified purpose" is namely:

- Obtaining sexual gratification (either for themselves or for the person they are enabling to view the victim's genitals, buttocks or underwear)
- To humiliate, distress or alarm the victim

Any incidents of upskirting will be reported to the appropriate DSL and handled in accordance with TCATs Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedure.

6. Cyberbullying

All personal electronic devices will be used in line with our Online Safety Policy.

Incidents of cyberbullying will be dealt with and reported in line with the Anti-Bullying Policy and the individual school Behaviour Policy.

As part of TCAT's ongoing commitment to the prevention of cyberbullying, regular teaching and discussion about online safety will take place as part of PSHE lessons.

7. Searching pupils

School pupils have a right for their private life to be respected under article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). This right is not absolute, and the school can interfere with this right as long as it is justified, proportionate, and aligns with the powers to search in the Education Act 1996.

All searches will be conducted in line with TCAT's Searching, Screening and Confiscation Policy.

The Headteacher/Head of School, and other authorised staff members, will have the power to search a pupil or their possessions where they have reasonable grounds to suspect that a pupil is in possession of a prohibited item. Mobile phones and similar devices will be deemed as prohibited items that may be searched for in line with the Behaviour Policy for an individual TCAT school.

In all cases the authorised member of staff will always:

- Seek the co-operation of the pupil before conducting a search
- Ensure the pupil understands the reason for the search and how it will be conducted

- Give the pupil the opportunity to ask any questions so that their agreement is informed
- Have due regard to the DfE's 'Searching, screening and confiscation' guidance

Staff may search a pupil's outer clothing, pockets, possessions, desks or lockers. Staff conducting a search must not require the pupil to remove any clothing other than outer clothing - outer clothing means any item of clothing that is not worn wholly next to the skin or immediately over a garment that is being worn as underwear and includes hats, shoes, boots or scarves. Possessions means any goods over which the pupil has or appears to have control - this includes desks, lockers and bags.

A staff member may ask a pupil to show them what they are doing on their mobile phone or tablet if they reasonably believe that the pupil is using the device to cause harm. If it is judged reasonable, the staff member may inspect the files or data on a pupil's electronic device and delete them if necessary.

Staff members will ensure they have a good reason to examine and delete data on a pupil's electronic device. When determining a good reason to examine data, staff members will ensure they reasonably suspect that the data has been, or could be, used to cause harm, undermine the safe environment of the school and disrupt teaching, or be used to commit an offence.

When determining a good reason to delete data, staff members will consider whether the material found may constitute evidence relating to a suspected offence and if so, choose not to delete the data. The data may be deleted if it is found likely to cause harm to any person, and the pupil and/or parent refuses to delete the data themselves.

If a search uncovers a device that is being used to cause harm, or which contains prohibited material such as pornography, a staff member can confiscate the device. If a staff member finds child pornography, it must be given to the police as soon as reasonably practicable. Where staff find stolen items like mobile devices, they must be given to the police as soon as reasonably practicable.

The staff member conducting the search must be the same sex as the pupil being searched. A witness to the search must be present; this should also be a staff member of the same sex as the pupil being searched.

Pupils are required to comply with any request to check their electronic device.

Pupils are required to comply with any request to disable the screen lock function of their electronic device and show any staff member what they are doing. Any pupil who refuses to comply with these requests will be disciplined in line with the Behaviour Policy for their school.

8. Accessing and storing data

Downloading and accessing inappropriate websites and data on TCAT-owned electronic devices is strictly prohibited.

Storing and using the personal data of any pupil or member of staff for non-work-related activity is strictly prohibited.

All data access requests will be handled in line with TCATs Data Protection Policy.

9. Sanctions

Using a personal electronic device is a privilege which can be revoked at any time. Any child caught acting in a manner that contradicts this policy will have their personal electronic device confiscated in line with the sanctions as set out in their school's Behaviour Policy.

Confiscated personal electronic devices will be locked away securely. Confiscated personal electronic devices will be collected by the pupil's parent/carer who will be contacted to do so.

Bullying via personal electronic devices will be dealt with in line with the Anti-Bullying Policy.

Mobile phones will be confiscated if they are seen, heard or used during the school day unless a pupil has been given permission or in line with accepted school policy. The Headteacher/Head of School will determine the length of time they deem proportionate for confiscation.

Pupils caught taking mobile phones or tablets into examinations will be banned from bringing personal electronic devices into school. They may also risk being disqualified from additional examinations.

Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed in line with the published schedule at the front of this document and at any point material changes require it by the Executive Headteacher/CEO in collaboration with the Board appointed Trustee, the Trust Board and Executive and Senior Leadership.

Any changes made to the policy will be amended by the Executive Headteacher/CEO and will be communicated to Executive Leaders, the TCAT Central Team and to Headteachers/Heads of School, who, in turn, will alert school-based staff.

The next scheduled review date for this policy is 31st August 2028.

Signed by:

| | Executive Headteacher/CEO | Date: |
| | Board appointed Trustee | Date: |