



Mobile Phone Policy

Mobile Phones and Handheld Devices

Responsibility for Policy: Senior Leadership team

Date policy written/rewritten: March 2014. (Last Review September 2026)

Date policy for review: September 2027

Applies to: Trust-wide (Cedars Academy: Low Fell and Cedars Academy: High Heworth)

1. Purpose and Scope

Cedars is a mobile phone-free environment by default. This policy sets out how the Trust keeps both sites phone-free during the school day, and how staff, pupils, parents/carers, volunteers and visitors may use mobile phones and similar devices. It supports the Behaviour Policy and the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

In this policy, 'mobile phone' includes any personal device that can communicate or record, such as a smartphone, smartwatch, tablet or camera. It does not include a pupil's communication aid or a device they need for a medical reason (see section 4).

The policy applies at Cedars Academy: Low Fell and Cedars Academy: High Heworth, on trips and visits, and to pupils while they are educated off site, for example at a further education college.

2. Legal and Statutory Framework

This policy meets the requirements of section 36 of the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 and the DfE statutory guidance 'Mobile phones in schools', which schools must follow from 30 June 2026. It also reflects Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026, which expects schools to be mobile phone-free by default; Behaviour in Schools (DfE, February 2024); Searching, screening and confiscation (DfE); sections 91 and 94 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, which allow schools to confiscate items; the Equality Act 2010; and data protection law (UK GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025).

3. Pupils

Pupils must not use, or have access to, a personal mobile phone during the school day. This includes lessons, the time between lessons, breaks and lunchtimes. Smartwatches and other connected devices are treated in the same way.

Where a pupil brings a phone, for example because they travel to school independently, it must be switched off and handed in on arrival, and collected at the end of the day. Phones are stored in a labelled bag and kept securely at reception.

If a pupil needs to contact home during the day, staff will help them use a school phone. Parents/carers must contact the school office, not their child's phone, during the school day.

Pupils use school devices, such as iPads, for learning under staff supervision. These are set up so that only the features needed for the activity are available.

Mobile phones and similar devices must not be taken into any examination. A pupil found with one may be reported to the awarding body, which can lead to disqualification.

Pupils will be taught, in ways they can understand, why the school is phone-free and how to stay safe when using phones and the internet, including the risks of sharing images.

4. Communication Aids, Medical Devices and Other Exceptions

The following are not treated as mobile phones. They must be available to the pupil at all times and must never be removed as a sanction:

- a pupil's communication aid, including an AAC app on a tablet or phone, which is their voice
- a device a pupil needs for a medical reason, such as a phone linked to a continuous glucose monitor

Other individual exceptions may be agreed where there is a documented medical, safeguarding, SEND or travel need, for example a young carer who must be contactable, or a need set out in a pupil's EHCP. Exceptions are agreed by the site Headteacher or Director of Inclusion, recorded using the agreement at Appendix 1, shared with the staff who work with the pupil and reviewed at the pupil's annual review.

5. Breaches, Confiscation and Searching

If a pupil uses a phone without permission, staff may confiscate it. Confiscation is a sanction under the Behaviour Policy and must be reasonable and proportionate to the pupil's age, understanding and needs. Staff will also consider whether the behaviour suggests the pupil may be at risk of harm and, if so, speak to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Confiscated phones are labelled and stored securely, and are returned to the pupil at the end of the day or to a parent/carer, as the site Headteacher decides. While the school holds a confiscated phone, it is responsible for keeping it safe.

Staff may search a phone, and look at its content, only where there is a good reason, for example a reasonable belief that it has been used to cause harm or commit an offence, or that it holds pornographic images. Searches follow 'Searching, screening and confiscation' and section 19 of the Behaviour Policy. Reasonable force must not be used to search for a phone that is banned only under this policy.

Where a phone may hold nudes or semi-nudes of a child, staff must not view, copy, forward or delete the image. They must secure the device and tell the Designated Safeguarding Lead at once, who will follow the UKCIS advice 'Sharing nudes and semi-nudes' and involve the police where needed.

Using a phone to bully, threaten, harass or humiliate anyone, to photograph or film people without consent, or to make or share nudes or semi-nudes, including images created or altered using AI, is serious misbehaviour. It will be dealt with under the Behaviour Policy and the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, and may be reported to the police.

6. Staff

Staff may use personal mobile phones only in staff-only areas where pupils are not present, in line with the Staff Code of Conduct. Staff must not use a personal phone for personal reasons in front of pupils during the school day.

A member of staff who needs to be reachable during the day, for example because a dependant is unwell, should agree an arrangement with their line manager. Staff can give the school office number as an emergency contact.

Staff may use a phone in front of pupils for work only where it is needed, for example for multi-factor authentication, during an emergency evacuation, or on a trip or visit. A Trust-issued phone should be used where one is provided.

Staff must not:

- take photos or recordings of pupils or their work on a personal device; school devices must be used
- give their personal phone number or social media contact to pupils or parents/carers, or store their contact details on a personal phone

- hold personal data on a personal phone, or put any personal or confidential Trust information into an AI tool

If a member of staff must call a parent/carer from a personal phone in an emergency, they should withhold their number, for example by dialling 141 first. Personal and work phones must be protected with a PIN or password. Failure to follow this section may lead to action under the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

7. Parents/Carers, Volunteers, Visitors and Contractors

Parents/carers, volunteers, visitors and contractors, including catering contractor staff, must follow this policy while on site during the school day. They must not use phones where pupils are present, and must not take photos or recordings of pupils. At events where the school allows photography, parents/carers may photograph their own child only, and must not post images of other children online.

Volunteers helping on trips must use their phones only to contact the trip leader or the emergency services, and must not take photos of pupils on a personal device. They must refer any phone breach by a pupil to a member of staff, as they cannot search or confiscate.

Visitors will be told the rules when they sign in. Parents/carers are asked to reinforce the phone-free approach at home.

8. Loss, Theft and Damage

Phones brought to school are the owner's responsibility. The Trust does not accept liability for loss, theft or damage, including on the way to and from school, other than while it holds a confiscated phone. Pupils should label their phone and protect it with a PIN. Lost phones found on site should be handed to the school office.

9. Roles, Monitoring and Review

The three co-headteachers are jointly responsible for this policy across the Trust. Each site Headteacher decides exceptions and the arrangements for storing and returning phones at their site. All staff must apply the policy consistently and challenge breaches.

The policy is published on the Trust website and shared with pupils, parents/carers and staff each year. It is reviewed annually by the policy owner, using incident records, feedback from pupils, parents/carers and staff, and any new DfE guidance.

10. Linked Policies

This policy links to:

- Behaviour Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Disciplinary Policy and Procedure
- Online Safety and Acceptable Use Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Complaints Policy

Appendix 1 - Mobile Phone Exception Agreement

Complete this form when an exception is agreed under section 4. Keep it with the pupil's records and review it at their annual review.

Pupil name	
Site and class	
Reason for the exception (medical, safeguarding, SEND or EHCP, travel, young carer, other)	
What the pupil may do (for example, carry a phone for the journey only, or keep a device with them for glucose monitoring)	
Where the device is kept during the school day	
Rules the pupil agrees to	Keep the device switched off or out of use except as agreed. Do not take photos or recordings of anyone. Do not use it to contact other pupils. Hand it to staff when asked.
Review date	
Parent/carers name and signature	
Pupil signature (where appropriate)	
Agreed by (site Headteacher/Dol) and date	