



Mobile Phones Policy for Pupils
(including Smart Technology and Devices with Similar Functionality)
In Schools

This policy is written to have regard to the Department for Education's statutory guidance "Mobile phones in schools" (updated 29 June 2026), which applies to independent schools as well as state-funded schools, and should be read alongside the school's Behaviour Policy, Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Anti-Bullying Policy, ICT and Online Safety/Acceptable Use Policy, Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education PolicySEND Policy.

Introduction and Purpose

Ealing Independent College is committed to providing a calm, safe and focused learning environment in which pupils can thrive academically, socially and emotionally. Mobile phones and similar smart technology, if unmanaged, can disrupt learning, contribute to bullying and online harm, and undermine pupils' wellbeing and attention.

This policy sets out the School's approach to mobile phones and devices with similar functionality (including smartwatches, tablets and any device capable of sending or receiving messages, calls or notifications, or recording audio or video) during the school day and, where relevant, during boarding and residential time.

This policy has been developed with regard to the Department for Education's statutory guidance Mobile Phones in Schools (updated 29 June 2026), which confirms that all schools, including independent schools, should be mobile phone-free environments by default, with any exception to this being by exception only. It should be read alongside the School's Behaviour Policy, with which it is fully aligned.

Scope

It applies throughout the school day — including lessons, transition times between lessons, break and lunchtimes.

References in this policy to "mobile phones" should be read as including other communications and smart technology with similar functionality, such as smartwatches, tablets with SIM or messaging capability, or any device that can send/receive notifications or messages, or record audio or video, unless the context makes clear that a distinct device (e.g. a school-issued BYOD laptop) is meant.

3. Our Default Position: A Mobile Phone-Free School

In line with statutory guidance, Ealing Independent College operates as a mobile phone-free environment by default. Pupils should not have access to a personal mobile phone (whether switched on or off) during the school day, including in lessons, between lessons, at break and at lunchtime, except where this policy expressly provides for supervised or limited access.

In the sections of the school where a 1 to 1 device scheme is in place to support learning, such devices are governed separately by the ICT Acceptable Use Policy.

Approach by Age Group

The School recognises that a single approach to storage and access is not appropriate across all age groups, and that expectations should reflect pupils' age, independence and, in the Sixth Form, their transition towards adult responsibilities. The sections below set out how this policy applies at each stage.

Reflecting the increased independence and responsibility of this stage of education, and in line with the statutory guidance, the School permits Sixth Form pupils access to their mobile phone at certain, limited times and locations, without this compromising the mobile phone-free approach that applies to the rest of the School.

- Sixth Form pupils may use their phones in the Sixth Form Common Room and designated Sixth Form study areas, during non-contact periods (free periods), and before and after the taught day.
- Phones must not be used in lessons, assemblies, the library (unless for approved research purposes at staff discretion), the dining hall at busy communal times, or corridors used by younger pupils, and Sixth Formers must not use phones in front of younger pupils.
- Sixth Form pupils remain fully subject to the School's Behaviour Policy. Misuse of a phone — including in a permitted area — may lead to sanctions, including withdrawal of phone privileges for a specified period.
- Sixth Form pupils are expected to model responsible, considerate phone use to younger pupils, consistent with their roles as prefects, mentors and role models within the School community.

Implementation

It is for the Headteachers, in consultation with Tutors, and the Designated Safeguarding Lead, to determine the practical method by which the School achieves a mobile phone-free environment for each age group (for example, lockers, collection by form tutors, or a defined "hand-in" point). The chosen method(s) will be:

- clearly documented and consistently applied by all staff;
- straightforward for pupils and parents to understand and follow;
- proportionate to the age and needs of the pupils concerned; and
- kept under regular review, including in light of any attempts by pupils to circumvent the policy.

Current arrangements for each age group are communicated to parents at the point of admission and at the start of each academic year.

Communicating the Policy

This policy is published on the School website and in the parent/pupil handbook, and is communicated to the whole School community, including new families at induction. Staff, pupils and parents are made familiar with the policy, how it operates day to day, and the sanctions that apply for breaching it.

Parents are reminded that, where they need to contact their child urgently during the school day, they should telephone the School office (or the relevant Boarding House), rather than their child's mobile phone directly. Staff will relay messages promptly.

The Role of Staff

- All staff are expected to enforce this policy consistently across the School day, in every location and at every changeover between staff.
- Staff should not use their own mobile phone for personal reasons in front of pupils during the school day. This supports staff in modelling the behaviour expected of pupils.
- Staff may use a mobile phone or similar device where necessary for professional purposes — for example, to set homework, record rewards or sanctions, use multi-factor authentication for School systems, or in an emergency. This is outlined in the relevant staff policy and employment manual.
- Tutors will ensure staff in their area understand these expectations and apply them consistently.

Expectations for Pupils

- Pupils will be reminded of this policy, and the sanctions for not following it, at the start of each academic year and at other points during the year as appropriate.
- Pupils are taught about the risks associated with mobile phone use, in school and more widely, including loss of focus, classroom disruption and the potential for bullying, as part of the PSHE, RSE and Health Education curriculum.
- Pupils are encouraged to see a mobile phone-free school day as something that benefits their learning, wellbeing and friendships, not simply as a restriction.

The Role of Parents

Parents play an important part in supporting this policy. The School asks parents to reinforce the reasons for a mobile phone-free school day at home, to avoid contacting their child directly by phone during the school day (using the School office instead), and to raise any questions or concerns about the policy with their child's Form Tutor, who will respond in a timely way.

Use of Sanctions and Confiscation

Breaches of this policy will be dealt with in accordance with the School's Behaviour Policy. Sanctions may include, depending on the nature and frequency of the breach and the pupil's age: a verbal warning, confiscation of the device for a period determined by the member of staff or for repeated or serious breaches, escalation in line with the Behaviour Policy.

- A phone may be confiscated where it is used, or is heard to ring or alert, in breach of this policy. Staff should consider whether confiscation is a proportionate response, taking into account the pupil's individual circumstances, including age and any SEND.
- Confiscated phones will be stored securely and returned to the pupil, or, for younger pupils or more serious/repeated breaches, released only to a parent or carer, as set out in the Behaviour Policy.
- Where a pupil's misuse of a phone gives staff cause to suspect the pupil is suffering, or at risk of, harm, staff will follow the School's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or a deputy) without delay.

Searching Pupils

The Head, or staff authorised by the Head, may search a pupil or their possessions where there are reasonable grounds to suspect the pupil is in possession of a mobile phone or similar device in breach of this policy, or any other item identified in the School's Behaviour Policy as an item that may be searched for. Searches will be carried out in accordance with the School's Searching, Screening and

Confiscation procedures, having regard to DfE guidance on searching, screening and confiscation in schools.

Adaptations and Reasonable Adjustments

While the School operates a mobile phone-free environment by default, it recognises its duties under the Equality Act 2010 and, where relevant, the Children and Families Act 2014, and will make reasonable adjustments to this policy for individual pupils where necessary.

- Disabled pupils: where access to a mobile phone during the school day is necessary because of the nature of a pupil's disability, the School will consider whether allowing such access is a reasonable adjustment, in consultation with the pupil, their parents and the SENDCo.
- Medical needs: where a pupil's medical condition is managed using a device linked to a mobile phone (for example, continuous glucose monitoring for diabetes), the School will not prevent phone use that is necessary to manage that condition, in line with its Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy.
- Individual circumstances: the School recognises that some pupils' need for phone access may depend on their wider circumstances, including at home (for example, young carers). Such flexibility will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Mobile Phones Outside the School Day, on Trips and Journeys

- Day pupils travelling to and from school: the School recognises that some parents wish their child to carry a phone for safety reasons on the journey to and from school. Where this is the case, the phone must be handed in and stored in accordance with the age-group arrangements, and used only before entering, or after leaving, the school site.
- School trips and residential visits: staff leading a trip will determine, and communicate to pupils and parents in advance, whether and how phones may be used, so that the educational purpose of the trip is not undermined by phone use, while ensuring pupils can raise welfare concerns if needed.
- Online safety: the School remains alert to online safety risks whether or not pupils have access to a phone during the school day, and pupils are always able to access a member of staff — and, where necessary, a phone — to raise a concern about something that has happened online. This is particularly important for boarders.

Filtering, Monitoring and Online Safety

The School maintains appropriate filtering and monitoring systems across its network and School-owned devices, which are reviewed regularly in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education, to reduce the risk of pupils accessing harmful or inappropriate content. This policy should be read alongside the School's Online Safety and ICT Acceptable Use Policies.

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