Mobile phone policy

Elements Diocesan Learning Trust

Approved by:		**Date:**
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1. Vision

Together we flourish in the love of God

Elements Diocesan Learning Trust values the individual nature of each school within the Trust family. We believe that every person is a unique and precious gift, created with purpose and value. We nurture each person as a child of God and recognise their inherent potential. Through our collective efforts, we inspire hope, nurture faith, and promote the flourishing of each school.

We ensure that every person is seen, valued, and empowered to succeed, regardless of their background or circumstances. Through justice and equity, we foster an inclusive environment where diversity is celebrated, and every person's unique gifts are honoured.

By embracing these principles, we create a culture where every person values themselves, their community, and the world around them to become compassionate, confident, and responsible individuals.

Values

To love, to learn, to serve – through collaboration, honesty and hope.

Our core values underpin all aspects of our Trust as we strive to make a positive difference to the lives of all pupils whilst they are at school and in later life. Through these values, we can be sure our community is one of hope; a place of transformation and trust, where all are treated with respect and dignity.

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Love
We are committed to Compassion and Care: As Christ commands, we strive to love one another deeply, fostering empathy, respect, and kindness. We create a culture where we genuinely care for each other, supporting personal, professional and spiritual growth, as we walk in His love.

Learn
We are committed to Continuous Growth and Wisdom: Following the call to grow in knowledge and understanding, we cultivate a culture of curiosity, adaptability, and continual improvement. We encourage all to seek wisdom and learning, guided by God's truth, that we might serve more effectively.

Serve
We are committed to Service and Impact: Inspired by Christ's example of humble service, we dedicate ourselves to serving others, contributing to the well-being of our schools, communities, and beyond, bringing His light and love into all we do.

Collaboration
We are committed to Unity in Purpose: We value working together in mutual respect, knowing that through collaboration, we can have a greater impact supporting each other to achieve our shared vision.

Honesty
We are committed to Integrity and Truth: Following Christ's call to live in truth, we foster a culture of honesty, transparency, and trust, ensuring that our actions reflect His integrity in all dealings, upholding the highest ethical standards.

Hope
We are committed to Inspiring Hope and Faith: As bearers of Christ's hope, we instil in every individual the belief in their God-given potential to achieve great things, trusting in His plan to bring good out of all circumstances, and inspiring hope for a future filled with His promises.

2. Introduction and aims

At Elements Trust we recognise that mobile phones and similar devices, including smartphones, are an important part of everyday life for our pupils, parents/carers and staff, as well as the wider school community.

Our policy aims to:

- Ensure our environment is mobile phone free by default
- Promote safe, responsible and lawful use of mobile phones, where applicable.
- Set clear guidelines for the use of mobile phones for pupils, staff, parents/carers, visitors and volunteers
- Support the trust and each member school's other policies, especially those related to child protection and behaviour

This policy also aims to address some of the challenges posed by mobile phones in school, such as:

- Risks to child protection
- Data protection issues
- Potential for lesson disruption
- Risk of theft, loss, or damage
- Appropriate use of technology in the classroom

Note: throughout this policy, 'mobile phones' refers to mobile phones and similar devices.

3. Relevant guidance

This policy meets the requirements of section 36 of the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026, and the Department for Education (DfE)'s mobile phone guidance and behaviour guidance. Further guidance that should be considered alongside this policy includes Keeping Children Safe in Education, which sets out the expectation that all schools should be mobile phone-free environments by default.

This policy adheres to the principles under data protection law. For further information, please view the trust data protection policy published on the trust website www.edlt.org

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1 Staff

All staff (including teachers, support staff and supply staff) are required to actively enforce this policy and challenge any breach of mobile phone restrictions immediately and consistently.

Volunteers, or anyone else otherwise engaged by the school, must alert a member of staff if they witness, or are aware of, a breach of this policy.

The headteacher is responsible for implementing the policy and holding staff and pupils accountable for its implementation.

Staff will address any questions or concerns from parents/carers quickly, and clearly communicate the reasons for prohibiting the use of mobile phones.

5. Use of mobile phones by staff

5.1 Personal mobile phones

Staff (including volunteers, contractors and anyone else otherwise engaged by the school) are not permitted to use their personal mobile phone, while children are present. Use of personal mobile phones must be restricted to non-contact time, and to areas of the school where pupils are not present (such as the staffroom).

There may be circumstances in which it's appropriate for a member of staff to have use of their phone during contact time for personal reasons. For instance (this list is non-exhaustive):

- For emergency contact by their child, or their child's school
- In the case of acutely ill dependents or family members

The headteacher will decide on a case-by-basis whether to allow for special arrangements.

If special arrangements are not deemed necessary, school staff can use the school office number as a point of emergency contact.

5.2 Smartwatches

Staff are permitted to wear smartwatches during the school day. However, all notifications must be switched off while working with pupils to avoid disruption and maintain professional boundaries. Smartwatches must not be used to send or receive messages, access social media, or capture images or recordings during contact time.

5.3 Data protection

Staff must not use their personal mobile phones to process personal data, or any other confidential school information, including entering such data into generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools such as chatbots (e.g. ChatGPT and Google Gemini).

More detailed guidance on data protection can be found in the trust's data protection policy and ICT acceptable use policy.

5.4 Safeguarding

Staff must not give their personal contact details to parents/carers or pupils, including connecting through social media and messaging apps.

Staff must avoid publicising their contact details on any social media platform or website, to avoid unwanted contact by parents/carers or pupils.

Elements Trust Staff Code of Conduct, and each member school's online safety and ICT acceptable use policy set out expectations for all staff regarding the use of social media

Staff must not use their personal mobile phones to take photographs or recordings of pupils, their work, or anything else that could identify a pupil. If it's necessary to take photos or recordings as part of a lesson/school trip/activity, this must be done using school equipment.

Each member school uses their relevant safeguarding system e.g CPOMs, My Concern etc to record matters relating to safeguarding and SEND. The platform is also used to maintain records of DSLs, deputy DSLs, Inclusion Leads, and SENCos. Staff have full access to relevant information via secure login, supported by multi-factor authentication. Personal staff phones are used to access the system for operational purposes.

5.5 Using personal mobiles for work purposes

In some circumstances, it may be appropriate for staff to use personal mobile phones for work. Such circumstances may include, but are not limited to:

- Use of multi-factor authentication
- Emergency evacuations
- Supervising off-site trips
- Supervising residential visits
- Calling emergency services

In these circumstances, staff will:

- Use their mobile phones in an appropriate and professional manner, in line with our staff code of conduct
- Not use their phones to take photographs or recordings of pupils, their work, or anything else that could identify a pupil
- Refrain from using their phones to contact parents/carers. If necessary, contact must be made via the school office

5.6 Work phones

Some members of staff are provided with a mobile phone by the school for work purposes.

Only authorised staff are permitted to use school phones, and access to the phone must not be provided to anyone without authorisation.

Staff must:

- Only use phone functions for work purposes, including making/receiving calls, sending/receiving emails or other communications, or using the internet
- Ensure that communication or conduct linked to the device is appropriate and professional at all times, in line with our staff code of conduct

5.7 Sanctions

Staff that fail to adhere to this policy may face disciplinary action.

See the trust's staff disciplinary policy for more information.

6. Use of mobile phones by pupils

Pupils are not permitted to use mobile phones at any point during the school day. This includes during lessons, between lessons, at breaktimes, and lunchtimes.

Mobile phones should not be brought to school. However, at the Headteacher's discretion, pupils in Years 5 and 6 may be allowed to bring a phone to school with parental permission—for example, if they walk home independently. In such cases, the phone must be handed in to the school office before the start of the school day for secure storage, and may be collected at the end of the day.

If a pupil in any other year group brings a phone to school, it will be stored securely in the school office and returned only to a parent or carer at the end of the day.

Pupils will be taught the risks that are associated with the use of mobile phones, both in school and more broadly, to make sure they understand the decision to prohibit the use of mobile phones throughout the school day. These risks can include a loss of focus in lessons, classroom disruption and an increase in bullying. Pupils will be encouraged to see a mobile-phone free environment as desirable and valuable.

6.1 Use of smartwatches by pupils

The DfE's statutory mobile phones guidance includes in the term 'mobile phones' all devices with communications and smart technology that the school chooses to include in its policy.

Smartwatches are wristwatches with smart technology in them. They can be used to tell the time, send and receive text and voice messages, make calls and listen to music. Some smartwatches have wellness and health-related features.

Pupils are not permitted to bring smartwatches to school. If a pupil does bring a smartwatch, it will be securely stored in the school office, and parents or carers will be contacted to collect it.

Where parents or carers have given prior permission, the smartwatch may be returned to the pupil at the end of the school day.

6.2 Exceptions for special circumstances

Mobile phones may be used by pupils during the school day only in exceptional circumstances, such as for the monitoring of medical conditions (e.g. diabetes) or other specific health needs. Permission must be granted by the Headteacher on a case-by-case basis, and appropriate safeguards will be put in place to ensure the phone is used solely for its intended purpose. To request permission, parents or carers should contact the Headteacher via the school office

6.3 Sanctions

If a pupil is found to be in breach of this mobile phone policy, the phone will be confiscated and securely stored in the school office. Parents or carers will be contacted, and the phone will either be returned directly to them or, where appropriate and with prior agreement, returned to the pupil at the end of the school day.

Confiscation of mobile phones is permitted under Sections 91 and 94 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, and may be carried out by the Headteacher or designated staff. Devices may be retained for a proportionate length of time, in line with DfE guidance on mobile phones in schools.

Sanctions for misuse will be applied in accordance with the school's Behaviour Policy, taking into account the nature and frequency of the breach. Repeated or serious misuse may result in further disciplinary action, including loss of privileges or escalation to senior leadership.

In line with the DfEs guidance Searching, screening and confiscation in schools - GOV.UK, staff may search a pupil's phone if there is a legitimate reason to do so—for example, if there is reason to believe the device contains inappropriate or harmful content, such as pornographic images, or if it has been used to commit an offence or cause harm to another person.

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Where inappropriate content is found or suspected, staff must follow safeguarding procedures and report concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). Parents/carers will be informed, and appropriate external agencies may be contacted if necessary.

This approach ensures that pupils, staff, and families understand the expectations around mobile phone use and the steps the school will take to uphold a safe and respectful learning environment.

In each case, the sanction given must be reasonable and proportionate. The school will also consider whether:

- There are any relevant special circumstances (for example, age, religious requirements, special educational needs, disability)
- The pupil's behaviour may indicate they may be suffering, or at risk of, harm. If this is suspected, staff will follow the appropriate procedure set out in Part 1 of Keeping Children Safe in Education

Certain types of conduct, bullying or harassment can be classified as criminal conduct. The school takes such conduct extremely seriously and will involve the police or other agencies as appropriate.

Such conduct includes, but is not limited to:

- Making of or sharing nudes and semi-nudes including images that are digitally altered or wholly generated using AI (such as 'deep fakes' or 'deep nudes')
- Upskirting
- Threats of violence or assault
- Abusive calls, emails, social media posts or texts directed at someone on the basis of someone's ethnicity, religious beliefs or sexual orientation

7. Use of mobile phones by parents/carers, volunteers and visitors

Parents/carers, visitors and volunteers (including governors and contractors) must adhere to this policy as it relates to staff if they are on the school site during the school day.

This means:

- Not taking pictures or recordings of pupils, unless it's at a public event (such as a school fair), or of their own child
- Using any photographs or recordings for personal use only, and not posting on social media without consent
- Not using phones in lessons, or when working with pupils

Parents/carers, visitors and volunteers will be informed of the rules for mobile phone use when they sign in at reception or attend a public event at school.

Parents/carers or volunteers supervising school trips or residential visits must not:

- Use their phone to make contact with other parents/carers
- Take photos or recordings of pupils, their work, or anything else that could identify a pupil

Parents/carers or volunteers supervising trips are also responsible for enforcing the school's policy for pupils using their phones, as set out in section 6 above, but must refer any sanctions to a member of staff, as they do not have the power to search or confiscate devices.

Parents/carers must use the school office as the first point of contact if they need to get in touch with their child during the school day. They must not try to contact their child on their personal mobile during the school day.

8. Loss, theft or damage

Pupils in Years 5 and 6 who have received permission from the Headteacher to bring a mobile phone to school must ensure the device is clearly labelled. Phones must be handed in to the school office at the start of the school day, where they will be securely stored, and collected at the end of the day.

Pupils who have permission to bring a mobile phone to school must ensure the device is secured as far as possible, including the use of passwords or PIN codes to protect access to its functions. Staff are also expected to secure both personal and trust/ school-issued phones appropriately. Failure to do so may result in data breaches and will be treated as a serious matter under the trust's data protection and safeguarding protocols.

The trust and its member schools accept no responsibility for mobile phones that are lost, damaged or stolen on school premises or transport, during school visits or trips, or while pupils are travelling to and from school.

Pupils, parents and carers are made aware of this policy though the school website and school newsletters.

Confiscated phones will be stored securely in the school office.

Lost phones should be returned to the school office. The school will then attempt to contact the owner.

9. Monitoring and review

The trust and its member schools are committed to ensuring that this policy has a positive impact on pupils' education, behaviour and welfare.

The CEO is responsible for reviewing and monitoring the policy.

When reviewing the policy, the trust will take into account:

- Feedback from parents/carers and pupils
- Feedback from staff
- Records of behaviour and safeguarding incidents
- Relevant advice from the Department for Education, the local authority and any other relevant organisations

If there are any concerns regarding this policy, these should be brought to the attention of the headteacher in the first instance.

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10. Appendix 1: Code of Conduct for pupils allowed to bring their phones to school due to exceptional circumstances

Code of Conduct

You must adhere to the following rules if you bring your mobile phone to school:

1. Your phone must be **switched off** when you arrive at school.
2. You must **hand it in at the school office** before school starts.
3. It will stay safely in the office all day and be returned to you at home time.
4. You must **not** use your phone anywhere on the school site.

Pupils with Medical Needs

Some pupils may need a mobile phone to help **track or monitor a medical condition** (for example, an app that checks blood sugar levels or other vital information).

If this applies to you:

1. Your parent/carer must discuss this with the school.
2. The **Headteacher must give permission** before you bring a phone to school.
3. Your phone will be kept safely in the school office unless a specific medical plan says otherwise.
4. Staff will follow your medical plan to make sure you are kept safe.

Keeping Everyone Safe

Even though phones are not used during the school day, these rules still apply:

1. You must not take photos, videos or recordings of anyone without their consent.
2. You must not use your phone to upset, bully or harass anyone, including through messages or social media.
3. Do not share your contact details with people you don't know, and do not share other people's contact details without their consent.
4. Do not share your phone's password(s) or access code(s) with anyone else.
5. You must follow any instructions from staff about your phone.
6. Don't use your phone to send or receive anything that may be criminal (including AI-generated images or 'deepfakes')
7. Don't use vulgar, obscene or derogatory language while on the phone or when using social media. This language is not permitted under the school's behaviour policy.
8. Don't use your phone to view or share any harmful content.

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11. Appendix 2: Permission form allowing a pupil to bring their phone to school

PUPIL DETAILS	
Pupil name:	
Year group/class:	
Parent/carer(s) name(s):	

The school has agreed to allow [pupil name] to bring their mobile phone to school because they:

- Travel to and from school alone
- Need the phone to support their medical needs

Pupils who bring a mobile phone to school must abide by the school's policy on the use of mobile phones, and its code of conduct.

The school reserves the right to revoke permission if a pupil does not abide by the policy.

Parent/carer signature: _____

FOR SCHOOL USE ONLY	
Authorised by:	
Date:	

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12. Appendix 3: Template mobile phone information slip for visitors

Use of mobile phones and similar devices in our school

- Please keep your mobile phone on silent/vibrate while on the school grounds
- Please do not use phones where pupils are present. If you must use your phone, you may go to the school office or outside school grounds.
- Do not take photos or recordings of pupils (unless it is your own child), or staff
- Do not use your phone in lessons, or when working with pupils

The school accepts no responsibility for phones that are lost, damaged or stolen while you are on the school grounds.

A full copy of our mobile phone policy is available from the school office.

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