# Mobile Phone Policy

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| Contributors | Rob Arrowsmith | | |
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| Note | This policy must not be amended without prior approval of the Education Director | | |

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## 1. Supporting Documents

This policy should be read alongside our:

- Behaviour Policy (EDU.POL.027)
- Safeguarding Children in Education Policy (EDE.POL.002)
- Online Safety Policy (EDU.POL.009)
- Anti-Bullying Policy (EDU.POL.007)
- Searching, Screening and Confiscation Policy (EDU.POL.035)
- SEND Policy (EDU.POL.022)
- Medical Conditions and Medication Policy (EDU.POL.030) and Allergy Safety Policy (EDU.POL.044)
- Staff Code of Conduct (EDU.POL.039)

Related policies are held within RADAR in the School's policy folder.

## 2. Introduction




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At The Acres we are a special school, and many of our pupils have experienced trauma, disruption or exclusion from previous settings. We know that phones and personal devices can be a source of distraction, anxiety and conflict, and that for some of our pupils they are also a lifeline to home. This policy sets out how we keep the school day calm, focused and safe while treating every pupil as an individual.

At The Acres we are a mobile-phone-free school by default. Pupils do not use mobile phones or personal devices during the school day. We hold this line firmly and fairly, and we make reasonable adjustments where a pupil genuinely needs access to a device for a medical, safeguarding or special educational need.

Our approach is grounded in Keys Connect, our relational and trauma-informed model. We explain the reasons for the policy, we teach pupils why a phone-free environment helps them, and we work with families so that the policy is understood and supported at home.

## 3. Aim & Scope

This policy applies to all pupils at The Acres, and to all staff, parents and carers, and visitors. It covers the whole school day, including lessons, the time between lessons, breaktimes and lunchtime, and it covers school activities, educational visits and the journey to and from school where relevant. It aims to:

- Keep the school day free from the distraction, disruption and conflict that mobile phones can cause, so that every pupil can learn and feel settled.
- Protect pupils from the online harms that can reach them through a phone, including bullying, harmful content and the sharing of images.
- Set a single, clear and consistent expectation that pupils, staff and families all understand.
- Make fair and lawful adjustments for pupils who need access to a device because of a disability, a medical condition or their individual circumstances.
- Meet our duties under the Independent School Standards and current statutory guidance, and follow the Department for Education mobile phones guidance as best practice.

## 4. Abbreviations and Definitions

This policy uses the following terms:

- Mobile phone: any mobile telephone belonging to or used by a pupil.
- Personal device: any other personal communication or smart technology with similar functions to a phone, for example a smartwatch, tablet or device that can send or receive messages or notifications, or record audio or video.
- School day: the time between the start of the first school session and the end of the last session on the same day.
- Mobile-phone-free by default: pupils do not have access to or use a phone or personal device at any point in the school day, unless an agreed adjustment is in place.



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- Reasonable adjustment: a change we make to avoid putting a disabled pupil at a substantial disadvantage, as required by the Equality Act 2010.

## 5. Policy Content

### 5.1 Principles and Approach

At The Acres our practice is guided by these principles.

Phone-free is the default. The starting point for every pupil is that phones and personal devices are not used during the school day.

We make adjustments, not exceptions of convenience. Where a pupil needs a device for a medical, safeguarding or special educational need, we agree a clear, individual arrangement and record it.

We explain, we do not just enforce. Pupils and families understand why the policy exists and how it helps.

We are calm and consistent. Every member of staff applies the policy in the same way, and a phone is never a reason for a confrontation that could be avoided.

Safety comes first. Pupils can contact home through the school, and any concern that a phone is being used to harm a pupil is treated as a safeguarding matter.

### 5.2 Mobile Phones in Practice

**Our mobile-phone-free position**

At The Acres pupils do not use mobile phones or personal devices at any point during the school day, including during lessons, the time between lessons, breaktimes and lunchtime. This applies to phones and to any other smart technology with similar functions, for example smartwatches and devices that send or receive messages or record audio or video. Devices that the school provides for learning are not covered by this policy and are used under our Online Safety and acceptable use arrangements.

**How phones are stored during the day**

Pupils may bring a phone to school so that they are safe on the journey to and from school. On arrival, phones and personal devices are handed in to staff or stored securely in accordance with the school's local arrangements, and they are returned at the end of the day. The way we do this at The Acres is set out in the school annex at Appendix A: All mobile phones are handed in to school staff upon arrival and then returned at the end of the school day.

**Staff use of mobile phones**

Staff do not use their own mobile phones for personal reasons in front of pupils during the school day. There may be occasions when it is appropriate for a member of staff to use a device for a professional purpose, for example to support a lesson,



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record a reward or use secure log-in. Where the school has early years provision, the use of personal phones and cameras by staff is also governed by the Early Years Foundation Stage and by our Safeguarding Children in Education Policy (EDE.POL.002) and Staff Code of Conduct (EDU.POL.039).

Smart glasses and emerging wearable technologies will be treated in the same way as mobile phones where they can record, communicate or access the internet.

**Adaptations and reasonable adjustments**

At The Acres we treat every pupil as an individual. We will allow a pupil access to a device during the school day where this is a reasonable adjustment for a disability, where it is needed to manage a medical condition, for example continuous glucose monitoring for a pupil with diabetes, or where the pupil's individual circumstances, such as being a young carer, mean access is genuinely needed. Many of our pupils have special educational needs, and we consider each case on its own merits.

An agreed adjustment does not mean a pupil is exempt from all restrictions. We set out when, where and how the device may be used, we record the arrangement in the pupil's plan and in Appendix B, and we review it. Any adjustment is agreed with the pupil and family and with the designated safeguarding lead where there is a safeguarding dimension.

**Site-specific exceptions**

Any further exception to the mobile-phone-free position at The Acres must be set out here, with a clear behavioural and safeguarding rationale that the school can defend to an inspector: This must be agreed with the headteacher at the start of the school day.

**Searching, screening and confiscation**

Phones and personal devices are identified in this policy as items that may be searched for. Staff authorised by the headteacher may search a pupil or their possessions where they have reasonable grounds to suspect the pupil has a phone or device in breach of this policy, or any prohibited item, following the Department for Education guidance on searching, screening and confiscation. Reasonable force may be used to search only for a prohibited item such as a weapon, alcohol, illegal drugs or a stolen item, never for an item identified only in the school rules. Where a search or a phone raises a safeguarding concern, the designated safeguarding lead is informed without delay. Detailed search procedures are set out in our Searching, Screening and Confiscation Policy (EDU.POL.035).

**Sanctions for breaching the policy**

Where a pupil breaches this policy, we respond proportionately and in line with our Behaviour Policy (EDU.POL.027). A member of staff may confiscate a phone or device as a sanction and hold it securely for a reasonable period. In deciding what is proportionate we consider the pupil's age and special educational needs and any



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individual circumstances. We always consider whether a breach suggests a pupil may be at risk of harm, and if so we follow our child protection procedures.

**Online safety and misuse**

Misuse of a phone or device, including bullying, sharing or creating sexual or intimate images, including images made or altered using artificial intelligence, or accessing harmful content, is treated seriously and dealt with under this policy together with our Safeguarding Children in Education and Online Safety policies (EDU.POL.009). Our filtering and monitoring systems are kept in place and reviewed regularly to help protect pupils from harmful or inappropriate content.

**Communicating the policy and contacting pupils**

We explain this policy and the reasons for it to pupils at the start of each year and at regular points, and to families when a pupil joins and whenever the policy changes. The policy is published so that pupils and parents can read it. Where a parent or carer needs to contact their child during the day, they should call the school office, and we will pass on the message or arrange contact.

**Mobile phones outside the school day and on visits**

On educational visits and activities outside the normal school day, we decide in advance how phones are managed so that the pupils' experience is not disrupted, and we make sure pupils can raise a concern or contact staff where they need to. Arrangements for any residential provision are set out separately.

### 5.3 Recording, Monitoring and Reporting

Confiscations and significant incidents involving phones or devices are recorded on Arbor. Any safeguarding concern arising from a phone is recorded and managed through CPOMS and reported to the designated safeguarding lead. Leaders monitor the impact of this policy, including any patterns affecting pupils with SEND or other vulnerable pupils, and report to the proprietor and governors on a regular cycle. Filtering and monitoring are reviewed at least once each academic year.

### 5.4 Equality and Inclusion

At The Acres this policy is applied fairly and without discrimination, in line with the Equality Act 2010. Many of our pupils have special educational needs or disabilities, and we make reasonable adjustments so that the policy is fair for every pupil. We monitor the impact of this policy on pupils with protected characteristics and adapt our practice to remove disadvantage. Any concern that this policy disadvantages a pupil or group should be raised with the headteacher.

## 6. Responsibilities

### 6.1 Pupils



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Hand in or store their phone or personal device as the school requires, and not use it during the school day. Tell a trusted adult, rather than use their phone, if something online is worrying them.

### 6.2 Staff

Apply the policy calmly and consistently, and model it by not using their own phone for personal reasons in front of pupils during the school day. Follow the agreed individual arrangement for any pupil who has one, and pass any safeguarding concern to the designated safeguarding lead without delay.

### 6.3 Leadership

Set and uphold the phone-free culture, decide how phones are stored, and make sure staff are clear on their responsibilities. Agree and review individual adjustments, and make sure the policy is published and communicated to families.

### 6.4 Governance

Hold leaders to account for the policy and its impact, and make sure appropriate filtering and monitoring are in place and regularly reviewed.

### 6.5 Parents and carers

Support and reinforce the policy at home, and contact their child during the day through the school office rather than directly on a phone.

### 6.6 Named leads

The named lead for this policy at The Acres Jo Rawlinson Deputy leading Behaviour and Pastoral issues. The Designated Safeguarding Lead is Jessica Howkins

## 7. Training Requirements

All staff are briefed on this policy at induction and at the start of each year, so that they apply it calmly and consistently. Staff receive training in online safety and in supporting pupils to stay safe online, in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education. Staff are supported to challenge breaches without escalation, in line with our Keys Connect and de-escalation training.

## 8. Equality Impact Statement

All policies will be developed and implemented in a manner that promotes equality, diversity, and inclusion, ensuring fair and equitable treatment for all individuals. Policies must align with relevant equality legislation and reflect the expectations and standards set by our regulatory bodies. They will demonstrate a commitment to eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity, and fostering an inclusive environment that respects and values the diverse needs, backgrounds, and experiences of those we support, as well as our workforce.

## 9. Sources of Information / References

This policy reflects current legislation and statutory guidance, including:



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- The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026, section 36, which places a duty to have regard to the Department for Education guidance on pupils having and using mobile phones during school hours and on school premises. This statutory have-regard duty applies to state-funded schools, so as an independent school we are not bound by it and we follow the guidance as best practice.
- The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, Part 3, Standard 9 (a written behaviour policy that is implemented effectively).
- The Independent School Standards: Guidance for independent schools, Department for Education, April 2026 (Standard 9, paragraphs 3.21 to 3.23 on mobile phones).
- Mobile phones in schools, Department for Education, updated 19 January 2026 (the guidance we follow as best practice).
- Behaviour in Schools: advice for headteachers and school staff, Department for Education, February 2024.
- Searching, Screening and Confiscation: advice for schools, Department for Education, July 2022, with section 550ZA of the Education Act 1996 and The Schools (Specification and Disposal of Articles) Regulations 2012.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025, and Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 from 1 September 2026.
- The Equality Act 2010 (the duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils).
- The Children and Families Act 2014, section 100 (supporting pupils with medical conditions).

## 10. Version Control

This document can also be found in Radar. This policy is reviewed annually, or sooner if legislation or statutory guidance changes. The named owner for review at The Acres is the headteacher.

## 11. Appendices



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## 11.1 Appendix A: School-Specific Annex

**Mobile Phone-Free Culture**

The Acres operates a mobile-phone-free environment for all pupils throughout the school day. Pupils are not permitted to use mobile phones, smart watches or other personal communication devices during lessons, social times, transition periods or enrichment activities unless an authorised adjustment has been agreed through the headteacher.

The purpose of this approach is to:

- Promote engagement in learning.
- Reduce distractions and conflict.
- Support positive relationships.
- Improve online safety.
- Reduce opportunities for cyberbullying and inappropriate communication.
- Support the emotional wellbeing of pupils.

**Arrival Procedures**

Pupils who bring mobile phones into school must hand them directly to a member of staff upon arrival.

Staff receiving devices are responsible for:

- Confirming receipt of the device.
- Ensuring devices are transferred immediately to secure storage.
- Reporting any refusal to hand over a device in line with the Behaviour Policy. Where concerns arise regarding concealed devices, staff may follow the procedures outlined in the Searching, Screening and Confiscation Policy.

**Storage Arrangements**

All mobile phones and personal devices are:

- Collected at the start of the school day.
- Stored within a locked metal cabinet located in the staff room.
- Accessible only to authorised members of staff.
- Returned to pupils at the end of the school day. The school accepts no responsibility for devices brought onto site, although reasonable measures will be taken to ensure secure storage.

**End of Day Collection**

Mobile phones are returned by staff at the end of the school day.
Where a pupil leaves site early:

- Devices will only be returned with authorisation from leadership or reception staff.
- Collection arrangements will be verified before release.



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**Parent and Carer Communication**

Parents and carers should not contact pupils directly during the school day using personal mobile devices.

If communication is required:

- Parents should telephone the school office.
- Urgent messages will be passed to pupils by staff.
- Pupils may be supervised while making contact with parents/carers where necessary.

Reception remains the primary point of contact throughout the school day.

**Adjustments and Exceptional Circumstances**

Any requirement for access to a mobile phone during the school day must be formally agreed by the headteacher.

Examples may include:

- Medical monitoring equipment.
- Safeguarding arrangements.
- Young carers.
- Exceptional SEND-related requirements.

All agreed arrangements must:

- Be documented.
- Include clear conditions of use.
- Be reviewed regularly.
- Involve the DSL where safeguarding considerations exist.

**Educational Visits**

For educational visits, community activities and off-site learning:

- Mobile phone expectations will be communicated in advance.
- Risk assessments will determine whether devices are permitted.
- Any approved use will be supervised by staff.
- Safeguarding and online safety expectations remain in place throughout the visit.

**Responding to Breaches**

Where pupils breach the Mobile Phone Policy:

- Devices may be confiscated.
- Incidents may be recorded on Arbor.
- Parents/carers may be informed where appropriate.
- Behaviour sanctions may be applied in line with the Behaviour Policy.
- Safeguarding concerns will be referred to the DSL immediately.

Particular concern will be given to:

- Recording or photographing others.
- Accessing inappropriate content.
- Cyberbullying.
- Sharing images or videos.
- Use of social media during the school day.



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**Online Safety and Safeguarding Contacts**

The designated school contacts are:

- **DSL:** Jessica Howkins
- **Pastoral Lead:** Leah Dent

**Monitoring and Review**

School leaders review:

- Mobile phone-related behaviour incidents.
- Online safety concerns.
- Safeguarding referrals linked to devices.
- Requests for reasonable adjustments.



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## 11.2 Appendix B: Individual Mobile Phone Adjustment Record

This record sets out an agreed adjustment for a pupil who needs access to a device during the school day. It is completed with the pupil and family, agreed by the headteacher, and reviewed regularly. Complete one record for each pupil.

| Section | Details |
|---|---|
| Pupil name | |
| Year and class | |
| Reason for the adjustment | Disability, medical condition, young carer or other individual circumstance |
| What is agreed | The device, and when, where and how it may be used |
| Conditions and limits | What the pupil must not do, and what counts as a breach |
| Safeguarding considerations | Any safeguarding points and DSL involvement |
| Agreed by | Pupil, parent or carer, and headteacher |
| Date agreed | |
| Review date | |



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