Mobile Phone Policy

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Contributors	Rob Arrowsmith		
Mandatory Policy	No		
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.

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2. Introduction

At Tees Valley College 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 Tees Valley College 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 tees Valley College, 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.

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- 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.
- 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 Tees Valley College 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 Tees Valley College 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 Tees Valley College is set out in the school annex at Appendix A. Phones are handed into tutor/teaching assistant on arrival to school and stored in a personal locker that will be situated in their tutor room.

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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, 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 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 Tees Valley College 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 Tees Valley College must be set out here, with a clear behavioural and safeguarding rationale that the school can defend to an inspector: Due to individual student EHCP primary need as ASD, ADHD or Anxiety, it may be an agreed and necessary for an IEP/IBP to allow students to access to mobile phone during the school day supervised by staff at all times.

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

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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 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 Tees Valley College 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

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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

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 and the Designated Safeguarding Lead is Marc Symington.

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

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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:

- 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 Tees Valley College is the headteacher.

11. Appendices

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11.1 Appendix A: School-Specific Annex

At Tees Valley College the following local arrangements apply:

- How phones and devices are stored during the day: Stored in an individual keyed locker in each tutor room.
- Where and to whom phones are handed in and collected: Tutor or TA responsible for the individual student.
- How parents contact a pupil during the day: School office number-01642-218776
- Local online safety and pastoral contacts: Shaun Briscoe (pastoral)

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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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