Mobile phone and smart devices Policy

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1. Introduction

At Ashton Primary School, the safety, wellbeing and education of our pupils are our highest priorities.

Mobile phones and smart devices can provide benefits outside of school, including allowing children to communicate with their families when travelling independently. However, their use during the school day can create distraction, disrupt learning and social interaction, and introduce additional safeguarding and online safety risks.

In line with current Department for Education guidance, Ashton Primary School operates as a mobile phone-free environment for pupils throughout the school day.

Pupils should therefore not have access to or use a mobile phone or personal smart communication device during the school day, including during lessons, transitions, breaktimes and lunchtimes.

This policy also establishes clear expectations for the use of mobile phones and smart devices by staff, parents and carers, volunteers, visitors and contractors while on the school site or participating in school activities.

Exceptions will be made where appropriate because of a pupil's medical needs, special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), safeguarding needs or other exceptional circumstances.

2. Aims

This policy aims to:

- safeguard children from risks associated with inappropriate mobile phone and smart device use;
- create a calm, safe and focused environment for teaching and learning;
- remove unnecessary distractions during the school day;
- reduce opportunities for online bullying, inappropriate communication and exposure to harmful content;
- protect pupils and staff from unauthorised photography, video or audio recording;
- promote positive face-to-face communication, interaction and play;
- establish clear and consistent expectations for pupils, staff, parents, carers and visitors;
- provide appropriate arrangements for children who need to carry a phone for their journey to and from school;

- ensure reasonable adjustments are made where a pupil has a legitimate medical, SEND or other exceptional need; and
- promote responsible and appropriate use of technology throughout the whole school community.

3. Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to:

- all pupils;
- all members of staff;
- parents and carers;
- governors;
- volunteers;
- visitors;
- contractors; and
- any other adults working with or visiting the school.

For the purposes of this policy, the term 'mobile phone or smart device' includes devices capable of communication, messaging, internet access, receiving notifications, photography, video or audio recording.

This may include:

- smartphones;
- basic mobile phones;
- smartwatches;
- internet-enabled watches;
- personal tablets;
- wearable communication devices; and
- any other personal technology with substantially similar functionality.

The school reserves the right to determine whether a particular device falls within the scope of this policy.

4. Expectations for Pupils

Pupils are strongly encouraged not to bring mobile phones or smart communication devices to school unless there is a genuine reason for doing so.

We recognise that some older pupils may travel to or from school independently and that parents and carers may wish them to carry a mobile phone for safety and communication outside the school day.

Where a pupil needs to bring a mobile phone to school:

- the phone must be switched off before entering the school playground;
- it must be handed to class teacher immediately on arrival;
- it will be stored securely throughout the school day;
- the pupil will not have access to the phone during lessons, breaktimes, lunchtimes or transitions;
- it will be returned at the end of the school day; and
- it should not be switched on or used until the pupil has left the school premises unless a member of staff has specifically authorised its use.

Mobile phones must not remain in pupils' pockets, coats, bags, trays or other personal storage areas during the school day.

Pupils must never use a personal device to photograph, film or audio-record another pupil, member of staff, parent, visitor or other individual on the school premises.

5. Watches and Smartwatches

Pupils may wear a simple analogue or digital watch to school for the purpose of telling the time.

Smartwatches are not permitted in school. This includes any watch or wearable device with smart functionality, such as the ability to:

- make or receive calls or messages;
- connect to the internet;
- connect to a mobile phone;
- take photographs, videos or audio recordings;
- access apps or games;
- receive notifications; or
- communicate or share information with other devices.

Smartwatches must not be worn in school even where communication, internet or notification functions have been switched off or disabled.

If a pupil attends school wearing a smartwatch, they will be asked to remove it. The device will be stored securely and returned at the end of the school day. Where this happens repeatedly, the school may ask a parent or carer to collect the device.

Where a pupil requires a wearable smart device for a specific medical need or as an agreed reasonable adjustment, this should be discussed with the school in advance and an individual arrangement will be agreed where appropriate.

6. Communication Between Parents and Pupils

Parents and carers should not contact their child directly through a mobile phone or smartwatch during the school day.

If a parent or carer needs to contact their child urgently, they should contact the school office. Staff will ensure that an appropriate message is passed to the child.

Similarly, where a pupil needs to contact their parent or carer during the school day, a member of staff will facilitate this through the school office or another school-approved method.

Children should not use their own personal devices to contact home during the school day without the knowledge and permission of a member of staff.

This ensures that school staff are aware of important communication affecting pupils and are able to provide appropriate support where necessary.

7. Medical Needs, SEND and Reasonable Adjustments

Ashton Primary School recognises that there may be circumstances in which a pupil requires access to a mobile phone or smart device during the school day.

This may include:

- use of a device to manage or monitor a medical condition;
- technology linked to medical equipment;
- a reasonable adjustment for a pupil with a disability;
- specific SEND requirements;
- safeguarding considerations;
- circumstances relating to a pupil's caring responsibilities; or
- another exceptional circumstance agreed by the Headteacher or Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Any exception will be considered individually.

Where appropriate, an agreed plan will identify:

- why access to the device is required;
- when the pupil may access it;
- where it may be used;
- which functions may be used;
- whether adult supervision is required; and
- how the arrangement will be reviewed.

An agreed exception does not necessarily mean that a pupil will have unrestricted access to their device throughout the school day.

The school will ensure that this policy is implemented in accordance with its duties under the Equality Act 2010 and that reasonable adjustments are considered where required.

8. Breaches of the Policy by Pupils

If a pupil is found to have a mobile phone or smart device in their possession during the school day without permission, or if a device is heard, seen or used, a member of staff may confiscate it.

The device will be stored securely.

Depending upon the circumstances, the school may:

- return the device to the pupil at the end of the school day;
- require a parent or carer to collect the device;
- contact the pupil's parent or carer;
- apply an appropriate consequence in accordance with the school's Behaviour Policy; and/or
- put additional arrangements in place regarding the pupil bringing a device to school in future.

Repeated or deliberate breaches will be treated more seriously.

Any response will be reasonable and proportionate and will take account of the child's age, SEND, individual circumstances and the nature of the incident.

9. Safeguarding Concerns

Misuse of a mobile phone or smart device may constitute a safeguarding concern.

Examples may include:

- cyberbullying;

- threatening, abusive or discriminatory messages;
- accessing or sharing inappropriate or harmful material;
- taking photographs, videos or recordings without permission;
- sharing personal information;
- sexual harassment;
- sharing nude or semi-nude images;
- exploitation;
- grooming;
- contact with unknown or unsafe individuals; or
- evidence that a child may be at risk of harm.

Where a member of staff becomes aware of a safeguarding concern involving a mobile phone or other device, this must be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or one of the Deputy DSLs immediately and dealt with in accordance with the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Staff should not undertake their own investigation into safeguarding concerns or unnecessarily view, copy, forward or share potentially harmful or illegal material.

Where appropriate, the school will seek advice from or make referrals to relevant safeguarding agencies and/or the police.

10. Searching and Confiscation

Ashton Primary School will follow current Department for Education guidance relating to searching, screening and confiscation.

The Headteacher and members of staff authorised by the Headteacher may undertake searches where the legal requirements for doing so are met.

Mobile phones and smart devices are identified within the school's rules as items which may be searched for where appropriate.

Where a device is confiscated, staff will act reasonably and proportionately and in accordance with the school's Behaviour Policy and current statutory guidance.

Where there is reason to believe that a device contains evidence relating to a safeguarding concern or criminal offence, staff must seek advice from the DSL and/or other appropriate agencies before taking further action.

11. School Trips, Residential Visits and Activities

The school's expectations regarding mobile phones and smart devices continue to apply during educational visits taking place as part of the normal school day.

For residential visits, trips outside normal school hours or other exceptional activities, the school will determine appropriate arrangements as part of the planning and risk-assessment process.

Parents, carers and pupils will be informed of these arrangements before the visit.

Where pupils are not permitted to bring mobile phones, appropriate arrangements will be in place to enable communication between school staff and parents where necessary.

Pupils must not use personal devices to photograph, film or record others during school activities unless this has been specifically authorised by a member of staff.

12. Staff Mobile Phones and Smart Devices

Staff have an important responsibility to model appropriate and responsible use of technology.

Personal mobile phones should not normally be used for personal reasons in front of pupils during the school day.

Staff should keep personal mobile phones securely stored when they are teaching, supervising or working directly with children.

There may be legitimate reasons for a member of staff to use a mobile phone or school-authorised device during the working day. These may include:

- multi-factor authentication;
- accessing an authorised school system;
- emergency communication;
- communication during an educational visit;
- school-related activities specifically authorised by a senior leader; or
- circumstances where use forms part of an agreed school procedure.

Any such use should be professional, proportionate and appropriate.

Staff must not use personal mobile phones to photograph or record pupils except in exceptional circumstances specifically authorised by the Headteacher and in accordance with school safeguarding procedures.

Photographs and recordings of pupils for school purposes should normally be taken using school-owned or school-approved devices and stored using approved school systems.

Staff must follow the school's Staff Code of Conduct, Acceptable Use Policy, Online Safety Policy and safeguarding procedures at all times.

13. Staff Communication with Pupils

Staff must not use their personal mobile phone number, personal messaging accounts or personal social media accounts to communicate privately with pupils.

Communication with pupils must take place through school-approved systems and in accordance with the school's safeguarding procedures and Staff Code of Conduct.

Staff must maintain appropriate professional boundaries in all electronic communication.

Any accidental or inappropriate contact from a pupil through a member of staff's personal account or device should be reported to the DSL or Headteacher as appropriate.

14. Parents and Carers Using Mobile Phones on the School Site

Ashton Primary School operates a mobile phone-free environment, and this expectation extends to parents and carers while they are on the school site.

Parents and carers must not use mobile phones or smart devices anywhere on the school site, including within the school building, playground, school grounds or other areas belonging to the school.

When entering the school site, mobile phones must:

- be placed on silent;
- remain stored securely in a bag, pocket or other personal belongings; and
- not be taken out or used until the parent or carer has left the school site.

This includes making or receiving telephone calls, sending or reading messages, accessing social media, browsing the internet, taking photographs or videos, and making audio or video recordings.

Parents and carers must not use a mobile phone or other personal device to photograph, film or record pupils, staff or other members of the school community while on the school site.

Where a parent or carer needs to make or receive an urgent or emergency call, they should speak to a member of staff, who will identify an appropriate place for them to use their phone away from pupils.

The school may make specific exceptions for particular events or activities. Where this is the case, parents and carers will be informed clearly in advance or at the event.

Parents and carers who are volunteering in school or accompanying an educational visit must also follow the additional expectations set out within this policy for volunteers.

15. Recording Meetings and Conversations

Parents, carers, visitors and staff should not covertly record meetings, conversations or telephone calls.

Where an individual wishes to make an audio or video recording of a meeting with school staff, this should be discussed and agreed with the school in advance.

The school will consider requests reasonably, including where recording may form part of a reasonable adjustment for a disability or additional need.

The school may also propose an alternative arrangement, such as providing written notes or allowing an agreed recording where appropriate.

This expectation is intended to promote open, respectful and transparent communication between school and families.

16. Parents and Carers Volunteering or Accompanying Trips

Where a parent or carer is acting as a volunteer, accompanying an educational visit or otherwise working directly with pupils on behalf of the school, they are expected to follow the same safeguarding principles regarding mobile phones as school staff.

Personal mobile phones should be stored securely and should not normally be used while supervising pupils.

They must not use personal devices to photograph, film or record pupils.

Where communication is required during an educational visit, this should take place using arrangements agreed by the member of staff leading the visit.

17. Responsibilities of Parents and Carers

Parents and carers are asked to support this policy by:

- considering whether their child genuinely needs to bring a mobile phone to school;
- ensuring any phone brought to school is handed in according to school procedures;
- not contacting their child directly on a mobile phone or smartwatch during the school day;
- contacting the school office when an urgent message needs to be passed to their child;

- reinforcing the school's expectations at home;
- discussing safe and responsible use of technology with their child;
- using their own mobile phone responsibly while on school premises;
- respecting the privacy of other pupils, families and staff when taking or sharing photographs;
- not covertly recording meetings or conversations with school staff; and
- supporting proportionate action taken by the school following a breach of this policy.

Parents and carers should contact the school if they believe their child requires an exception or reasonable adjustment.

18. Visitors, Volunteers and Contractors

Visitors, volunteers and contractors are expected to use mobile phones responsibly while on school premises.

Personal phone use should be kept to a minimum and should not normally take place while working directly with or supervising pupils.

Visitors, volunteers and contractors must not photograph, film or audio-record pupils unless this has been expressly authorised by the school.

Where a visitor or contractor needs to use a mobile phone as part of their work, this should be done appropriately and, wherever possible, away from pupils.

Any safeguarding concern regarding the use of a device by an adult on the premises should be reported immediately to the DSL, Headteacher or another appropriate senior member of staff.

19. Governors

Governors visiting school are expected to follow the same expectations as other visitors.

Personal mobile phones should be used appropriately and should not be used to photograph, film or record pupils.

Where governors require access to devices for legitimate governance business, this should be managed in a way that does not compromise safeguarding or disrupt school activities.

20. Photographs and Recordings of Pupils

Photographs, videos and audio recordings of pupils taken for educational or school purposes must be managed in accordance with the school's safeguarding, data protection, online safety and consent arrangements.

Staff should use school-owned or school-approved devices wherever possible.

Images and recordings of pupils must be stored securely using school-approved systems and must not normally be stored on personal devices.

No adult or pupil should photograph, film or record a child in circumstances where this would compromise the child's privacy, dignity or safety.

Any suspected inappropriate recording will be treated seriously and may be dealt with under the school's Behaviour Policy, Staff Code of Conduct and/or safeguarding procedures.

21. Education and Online Safety

Operating as a mobile phone-free school does not remove the need to educate pupils about responsible use of technology.

Through the curriculum, including Computing and PSHE/RSHE, pupils will be taught about:

- responsible use of technology;
- privacy and personal information;
- healthy relationships online;
- cyberbullying;
- harmful and inappropriate content;
- communicating safely online;
- online exploitation and grooming;
- seeking help when something happens online that worries or upsets them;
- the potential permanence and consequences of online activity; and
- developing a healthy and balanced relationship with technology.

Pupils will also be helped to understand why Ashton Primary School operates as a mobile phone-free environment and the benefits this provides for learning, relationships, play and wellbeing.

22. Responsibility for Personal Devices

Where pupils, staff, parents, carers or visitors bring personal mobile phones or smart devices onto school premises, they remain responsible for those devices.

The school will take reasonable care of devices formally handed to staff for secure storage but cannot accept responsibility for loss or damage except where responsibility arises under law.

Pupils should not bring expensive or unnecessary personal technology into school.

23. Equality and Inclusion

This policy will be implemented fairly, consistently and proportionately.

The school recognises that a blanket approach may not be appropriate in every circumstance.

When applying this policy, the school will consider:

- pupils with SEND;
- disabilities and medical conditions;
- safeguarding needs;
- religious or cultural considerations where relevant;
- pupils with caring responsibilities; and
- other individual circumstances.

Reasonable adjustments will be made where required and decisions will be based on the individual needs of the child.

24. Links to Other Policies

This policy should be read alongside the school's:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy;
- Behaviour Policy;
- Online Safety Policy;
- Staff Code of Conduct;
- Acceptable Use Policy;
- Anti-Bullying Policy;
- SEND Policy;
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy;

- Educational Visits Policy; and
- Data Protection Policy.

25. Monitoring and Review

The Headteacher and Governing Body are responsible for monitoring the implementation and effectiveness of this policy.

Expectations will be communicated clearly to pupils, staff and parents and applied consistently across the school.

This policy will be formally reviewed annually, or sooner where:

- Department for Education guidance changes;
- Keeping Children Safe in Education or other safeguarding guidance changes;
- relevant legislation changes;
- developments in technology create additional risks or considerations;
- incidents indicate that amendments are required; or
- the school identifies a need to change its arrangements.

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