



PLYMOUTH COLLEGE
MOBILE PHONE POLICY
Including Early Years Foundation Stage

Last reviewed:	April 2026
Next review date:	April 2027
Responsibility:	Senior Deputy Head

Plymouth College is committed to providing a calm, purposeful and safe environment in which pupils can learn well, engage positively with others and take full part in school life. This policy supports that aim by setting clear expectations around the use of mobile phones, personal devices and wearable technology during the school day. It is intended to reduce distraction, promote concentration, strengthen face-to-face interaction and support pupils' wellbeing.

The School also recognises the importance of digital citizenship. Pupils should be taught how to use technology responsibly, safely and with good judgement. This policy therefore does not reject technology, but places clear boundaries around when and where it is appropriate. It also allows for limited and clearly managed exceptions where there is a genuine medical, SEND or operational reason. This reflects current Department for Education guidance that schools should be mobile phone-free by default during the school day, with carefully defined exceptions where necessary.

For pupils in Years 7 to 11, mobile phones must not be used during the school day unless a specific authorised exemption applies. During this time, devices must be kept out of sight. The use of smartwatches, other than for purposes of telling the time is restricted and will be monitored by staff.

This expectation applies throughout the school day, including before lessons, between lessons, at breaktime, at lunchtime and at any other point when pupils are on site and under the School's supervision. The School expects all members of the community to support this approach so that pupils can focus fully on learning, relationships and the wider life of the School.

This policy applies to pupils, staff, parents and visitors. Exemptions to this policy for staff, owing to their own needs and/or role in school with specific requirements will be granted by the Senior Deputy Head.

General principles

Any personal device brought onto the school site is brought at the owner's risk. The School accepts no responsibility for the loss, theft or damage of phones, personal devices or wearable technology brought onto the premises.

The School may search a pupil, their possessions or a device where there are reasonable grounds to do so and where such action is lawful, proportionate and in line with the School's behaviour, safeguarding and searching procedures.

Pupils must not use personal devices to take photographs, videos or audio recordings without permission. This includes the taking, storing or sharing of any such material. The misuse of cameras, audio functions or messaging features will always be taken seriously.

Pupils must not use Bluetooth, personal hotspots, tethering or similar functions to bypass the School's filtering, monitoring or network systems. Any attempt to circumvent the School's digital safeguards will be treated as a breach of this policy and may also fall under other behaviour or safeguarding procedures.

Alongside these restrictions, the School will continue to educate pupils about online safety, privacy, image-sharing, cyberbullying, digital reputation and responsible online conduct. The aim is not simply to restrict use, but to educate pupils to use technology well and with proper judgement.

Bring Your Own Device

Where pupils are permitted to use personal devices for learning, this must be in line with the School's BYOD and ICT Acceptable Use arrangements.

This does not include mobile phones.

Approved educational devices may be used only where staff have permitted this and where their use supports learning appropriately. The existence of a BYOD arrangement does not alter the School's mobile phone-free expectations during the school day.

Prep School pupils

Prep School pupils should only bring a phone or similar device to school where there is a clear and agreed need, such as travel arrangements to and from school.

Any such device must be handed in at Reception at the start of the day and collected at the end of the day. All items should be clearly named so that they can be stored and returned safely.

If a pupil is found using a device without permission, it will be confiscated and the School's behaviour procedures will apply. The device will usually be held securely until the end of the day unless further investigation is required.

If images, recordings or messages involving pupils or staff have been created or shared, the device will not be returned until the relevant material has been deleted in the presence of a

member of staff. Safeguarding action may also be taken where required, including referral to senior staff or external agencies where appropriate.

Senior School pupils in Years 7 to 11

The rule for Years 7 to 11 is simple: On Site - Out of Sight.

When on site, mobile phones must not be seen, heard or used at any time, including during break and lunchtime. The expectation is that pupils are fully present in school life and not relying on mobile phones during the day. The use of mobile phones in after school activities is at the discretion of the staff member leading this and pupils should follow the specific instructions of staff.

Pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 must hand their phones in at the start of the school day and collect them at the end of the day, unless alternative arrangements have been made for Supervised Prep or another approved activity.

Pupils in Years 10 to 11 may bring a phone to school for travel purposes, but it must remain out of sight throughout the school day unless an authorised exception applies. A phone that is seen, heard or used during this period will be treated as a breach of the policy.

Phones must not be used in lessons, corridors, toilets, changing rooms, at breaktime or at lunchtime. They must not be used for checking messages, making contact with home, listening to music, accessing social media, taking photographs or any other personal purpose during the school day. Pupils wearing airpods (or similar) when transiting the site is not allowed.

If a pupil needs to contact home during the day, this must be done through the School Office or another authorised member of staff. This ensures that communication is managed properly and that staff remain aware of any pastoral or medical concern.

If a pupil feels unwell, they must report to the Health Centre before contacting parents directly. This allows the School to assess the situation properly and ensure that any medical or welfare issue is handled in an appropriate and consistent way.

Sixth Form pupils

The School recognises that Sixth Form pupils are at a stage of increasing independence and responsibility. Sixth Form pupils may therefore use personal devices only within the Sixth Form Centre.

Devices must be put away before leaving the Sixth Form Centre. Use is not permitted in shared areas such as corridors, the canteen, classrooms or other spaces where younger pupils are present.

As senior pupils in the School, Sixth Formers are expected to model good judgement, maturity and responsible conduct. Their behaviour should support, rather than undermine, the School's expectations for younger pupils. Repeated misuse could result in confiscation and may lead to further sanctions, as adopted with younger pupils in school. The Head of Sixth Form will oversee this and escalate to formal sanctions at their discretion.

Smartwatches and wearable technology

Pupils must not allow smartwatches or similar devices to distract them during the school day. Where use of devices is deemed to be inappropriate, they will be confiscated, in line with mobile phones.

Temporary supervised use

In exceptional circumstances, a pupil may ask a member of staff for brief supervised use of a phone, for example to check urgent travel arrangements or an important parental message.

Such use is not automatic and is entirely at staff discretion. It should be brief, for a clear purpose, and supervised throughout by the member of staff granting permission. This arrangement is intended for genuine practical need and should not become routine.

Medical and SEND exemptions

The School recognises that some pupils may need access to a device for medical reasons, such as diabetes monitoring. In such cases, appropriate medical evidence must be provided and approval must be given by the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Where approved, a Medical Device Pass will be issued. Use must be limited to the agreed medical purpose and should not extend to general personal use. Any misuse may result in the exemption being reviewed.

Reasonable adjustments may also be made for pupils with documented SEND needs where this is agreed by the SENDCo and recorded in the pupil's support documentation. In such cases, the School will ensure that agreed arrangements are clear, proportionate and understood by relevant staff.

All exemptions will be kept under review and must only be used for the agreed purpose.

Recording images, video and audio

Pupils must not use personal devices to record, store or share images, video or audio unless a member of staff has given clear permission for a specific educational purpose.

Any such use must be supervised and open to scrutiny. Permission may be withdrawn at any time if staff judge that the use is no longer appropriate.

The unauthorised recording of staff or pupils, or the sharing of such material, is likely to be treated as a serious breach of school expectations and may also raise safeguarding concerns.

Sanctions for pupils in Years 7 to 11

Breaches of this policy will be dealt with consistently and proportionately. The School's aim is to ensure that expectations are clear and that repeated misuse is addressed firmly.

For a first offence within a half-term, the device will be confiscated until the end of the day, an instant lunchtime detention will be issued, and 2 Respect and Responsibility points will be recorded on iSAMS.

For a second offence within a half-term, the device will again be confiscated until the end of the day and an after school detention (3 Respect and Responsibility points) will be issued and recorded on iSAMS.

For a third offence within a half-term, the pupil must hand their phone into Reception by 08:30 each day and collect it at 15:45 for the remainder of the half-term. In addition, the sanction is an Internal One Day Suspension, with 5 Respect and Responsibility points will be recorded. This stage also triggers a parental meeting with the relevant Head of Year.

In applying sanctions, staff will take account of age, SEND, medical needs and any other relevant circumstances. Any safeguarding concern arising from device misuse must be referred to the DSL or deputy DSL without delay.

Examinations

Mobile phones and other unauthorised smart devices must not be taken into examination rooms or other assessment settings where they are prohibited.

Any pupil found with such a device may be reported to the relevant examining body and may face disqualification in line with examination regulations. Pupils are responsible for ensuring that phones and similar devices are left outside the examination room in accordance with instructions given.

Pupils must adhere to all existing policies and procedures regarding public examinations.

School trips and off-site activities

Pupils may be permitted to carry a phone on trips where staff judge this to be appropriate, particularly for travel purposes or where communication arrangements require it. Pupils must follow the instructions of staff at all times, with specific arrangements in place, for example, for Outdoor Education.

Trip leaders may set phone-free periods, restricted use times or full phone-free expectations depending on the nature of the visit, the age of the pupils and the safeguarding or educational needs of the trip.

Pupils must follow the specific instructions of staff.

On overnight trips, phones may be handed to the lead member of staff overnight, if appropriate. Any such arrangements should be clear to pupils and parents before departure.

Boarders

Boarders must not use phones during the teaching day when not in the boarding house.

Use outside the teaching day is managed through boarding routines and staff expectations. In particular, during prep time in the house, mobile phones are not permitted. This is intended to support healthy routines, appropriate supervision, proper rest and balanced social interaction within the boarding community.

Boarders must follow staff instructions about phone use, storage and overnight arrangements. Failure to do so may result in sanctions under boarding or school behaviour procedures.

Staff use of personal devices

All staff sign the School's ICT Acceptable Use Policy each year.

Staff are expected to model the School's expectations by avoiding personal mobile phone use in front of pupils during the school day, particularly in public areas, on duty and in lessons. Staff conduct should support the wider culture the School is seeking to establish.

Staff may use phones for legitimate professional reasons, including emergency communication, school systems, multi-factor authentication and off-site activities. Any such use should be appropriate, limited and clearly connected to professional need.

Staff should not give personal mobile numbers to pupils except in genuinely exceptional circumstances. This must be authorised by and reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, preferably in advance.

Where staff need to use a personal phone to contact parents in an emergency, they must withhold their number.

Staff in the Early Years Stage

Personal devices, including phones and smart watches, must not be used by staff, visitors, or parents in child-facing areas and should be stored securely, with staff using only setting-owned equipment for photographs, monitoring, and communication. Staff phones must be kept in designated secure areas rather than on their person and may only be used during breaks in non-child areas. Personal devices must never be used to take photographs or videos of children, with only school-owned devices such as tablets or cameras permitted for this purpose. Visitors and parents should be informed of this policy on arrival and asked to leave their devices in a safe place, while on outings or trips staff must use only designated setting mobile phones for emergencies and communication. Smart watches are treated in the same way as mobile devices and should either be removed or have messaging and camera functions disabled.

Any breach of this policy by a member of staff may lead to disciplinary action.

Medical Exemptions for Staff

In exceptional medical circumstances, staff may be granted permission to carry a personal mobile device for health-related monitoring (e.g., diabetes management). Any exemptions must be requested through HR, in consultation with senior staff. Any exemptions must be documented formally and limited strictly to the agreed medical purpose. The device must not be used for personal communication, photography or any non-medical function in child-facing areas.

Parents

Parents should not contact pupils directly on mobile phones during the school day. Any urgent message should be passed through the School Office so that it can be managed appropriately.

Parents are expected to support the School's mobile phone-free approach and reinforce these expectations at home. Clear support from home helps pupils understand that the School's expectations are reasonable, consistent and important.

The School accepts no liability for loss of or damage to personal devices brought onto site.

Parents using phones or devices as cameras at school events must follow the School's policy on taking, storing and using images of pupils.

Review and communication

This policy will be shared clearly with staff, pupils and parents.

Pupils will be reminded of expectations and consequences regularly, including at the start of the school year and at appropriate points throughout it.

The School will review this policy periodically to ensure that it remains clear, effective and consistent with safeguarding, behaviour and pastoral expectations.

*Plymouth College is part of the Galaxy Global Education Group. The College is managed by the Schools Management Board of the Galaxy Global Education Group (*which is responsible for Group Governance and Local Advisory Board Liaison, Co-ordinating Learning Initiatives & Setting Group KPIs, Regulatory Compliance, Safeguarding Oversight & Student Voice*). The Local Advisory Board (LAB) is an advisory sub-committee of the Galaxy Global Education Group Schools Management Board, providing local insight, support, and challenge to the school's leadership in regards to educational standards and school improvement, safeguarding and welfare, community and stakeholder engagement, compliance and reporting. The Chair of the LAB is appointed by the Chair of the Schools Management Board and the LAB is composed of 3-4 local members appointed by the Chair of the Schools Management Board (with whom formal governance authority rests) and approved by the Board of Directors of the Galaxy Global Education Group.