

Durrington High School

Student mobile phone & smart device policy

Author: Chris Woodcock	Date: May 26
Approved by: Local Committee	Date: 16th July 26

Student mobile phone and smart device policy

Effective from 1st September 2026

This policy forms part of the school's wider approach to behaviour, safeguarding and high expectations. The Department for Education expects schools to implement a policy whereby pupils do not have access to their mobile phone throughout the school day

The purpose of this policy is to:

- ensure every student benefits from a calm, focused and safe environment where their learning is prioritised and is free from disruption,
- do all we can to mitigate against known safeguarding risks and concerns associated with unsupervised access to smart devices, and
- ensure the school is compliant with Department for Education expectations and the law.

We recognise that smartphones and devices can be valuable tools for adults. However an increasing amount of research highlights the negative impact of smartphones and social media use on children's mental health, wellbeing and development. It is known that smartphones create wider risks to children with the potential to expose them to harmful and dangerous individuals and content online. Consequently, these devices are often incompatible with ensuring child safety and we are acting in the student's best interests by not allowing them onsite. Provision will remain in place for students to be able to report any online safety concerns. Students can both speak to a trusted member of staff or use one of the other reporting routes they are made aware of in lessons, P1 and assemblies.

This is not an anti-tech policy. We continue to embrace the benefits of technology and the use of this in a safe way as part of education. We remain committed to helping every student thrive in today's quickly moving world and their futures.

Our rules on smartphones and smart devices

Students are not permitted to bring a smartphone or other prohibited smart device onto the school site at any time*. This expectation directly aligns to the government's statement which states "*all schools should be mobile phone-free environments by default*". The expectation requires schools to stop all access to mobile phones & smart devices in school.

*Exceptional circumstances

In exceptional cases a student may require access to a device for a specific reason. In these situations we will consider making a reasonable adjustment to this policy as set out by the Equalities Act 2010. This may be the case, as an example, for students who are young carers. The final decision on whether or not an adjustment is agreed is made at the discretion of the Headteacher. All such adjustments will be formally agreed, recorded and reviewed. As a general rule distance to home on its own would not be considered an exceptional circumstance.

Devices covered by this policy

All devices capable of internet access, taking photos or videos, using “applications” and/or messaging (via any means other than SMS) are banned. This includes smartphones, smartwatches, tablets, wireless earbuds, smartglasses and any comparable technology.

What this means

Students must ensure that smartphones and connected devices that are covered by this policy are never brought onto the school site. Being in possession of such a device, even if switched off, is a breach of this policy. This is because there is a growing body of research that indicates that even the presence of a smartphone (whether on silent or switched off) can negatively impact the attention and cognitive capacity of students.

Alternative communication/tracking devices

We recognise that, for some parents, their child having a communication device is a helpful tool in safeguarding them. Therefore students will be permitted to bring a basic mobile phone without internet capability (a “brick” phone) for use before and after school to support safe travel. We are aware that some “brick phones” now feature built-in GPS trackers or parental management apps designed to combine digital detox with peace of mind. The use of location-tracking tags is permitted where parents/carers feel this would be beneficial.

These devices too remain subject to clear expectations. “Brick” phones, if brought to school, must be switched off and not seen or used at any point during the school day. If a brick phone is seen or used, it will be confiscated and students can then collect them at the end of the school day.

Brick phones can be used by students after 3.10pm each day and only once students have exited the school building.

Breaches of this policy

The school operates a clear and consistently applied system of sanctions if this policy is breached. This ensures that expectations are understood and reinforces the importance of compliance.

- On the first occasion that a pupil is found in possession of, or using, a smart or connected device the device will be confiscated[^] and must be collected from the school by a parent, carer or nominated Arbor contact.
- If there is a second occasion, the device will be confiscated[^] and retained by the school for a continuous period of one week (7 consecutive days which includes weekends). A parental meeting will be required before the device is returned to ensure that expectations are fully understood and supported.
- Any subsequent possession or use of a device will mean the device being confiscated[^] for a longer period (minimum of 14 days of confiscation including weekend days), and an escalated sanction issued in line with the school's behaviour policy. This may include internal exclusion or further escalation where appropriate.

[^]Staff have powers to confiscate prohibited items in accordance with relevant education legislation and Department for Education guidance on searching, screening and confiscation

Failure to comply with a reasonable request to switch off and hand over a device to a member of staff will be treated as a breach of the school's behaviour expectations. The school will not enter into negotiation over confiscation or the application of this policy with either students or parents/carers.

For "brick" phones they will be returned on the first occasion to the student at the end of the day. Further issues will result in increased sanctions.

The school accepts no responsibility for loss or damage to devices that have been confiscated under this policy.

Searching and confiscation

There will be no systematic screening or searching of students for phones or smart devices. Staff will only check to see if a student has a phone/smart device if there is reason for them to believe a student has breached expectations as set out in this policy.

The school reserves the right to search for and confiscate devices where there is reasonable suspicion that a pupil is in possession of, or has been using a prohibited smartphone or device. Searches will be conducted in line with Department for Education guidance and school policy.

Further points related to searching and confiscation:

- Where there are safeguarding concerns, the school may examine the content of a confiscated device taking any necessary next steps to minimise risk and protect student(s) concerned.
- The school takes no responsibility for the loss, damage or theft of any personal electronic device brought onto the school site. Students are not to bring smart devices to school.
- Exams operate on a tighter set of checks, this being directed by the exam boards.

The support of parents and carers

We continue to value our strong and positive working relationships with parents/carers and, alongside the government, know that parents/carers have an important role to play as we move forward together. The government reinforces this expectation stating *"Parents have an important role in supporting the school's policy on prohibiting the use of mobile phones... Parents should also be encouraged to reinforce and discuss the policy at home as appropriate, including the risks associated with mobile phone use and the benefits of a mobile phone-free environment"*

If there is an urgent or emergency situation a parent/carer will, as normal, be able to get a message to their child via the main school office. Staff will ensure that messages are passed on promptly and appropriately without disrupting learning.

Finally, as normal, we ask that parents/carers do not contact their child via phone or message (even to brick phones) during the school day. This is to avoid creating a situation where their child may end up being sanctioned for being in breach of this policy by looking at or responding to a call or message.

Information specific to educational trips, visits, sports fixtures and weekend events

This policy applies to all school activities unless otherwise advised. If there is a policy variation for a specific trip/event/activity then parents, carers and students will be notified in advance of the event. Parents/carers will always have emergency contact information to use if their child is attending a school event outside of core hours.

Summary

Through this policy, the school aims to create a culture in which students are fully present, engaged in learning and free from the distractions and risks associated with smart device use.

[Mobile phones in schools - GOV.UK](#)

Frequently asked questions

FAQ	Information
Will you search/check students each day for smart phones/ devices?	<i>No, this will not be a part of our current plan.</i>
What if a parent/carers is not available to collect their child's phone at the end of the day?	<i>Any named Arbor contact can be nominated to collect the device. For safety and security reasons it has to be a named contact only.</i>
I believe there is an exceptional reason why my child should have a smartphone. What should I do?	<i>Please contact the school. Requests will be considered on a case by case basis. It is highly unlikely that travel distance alone would be considered an exceptional circumstance.</i>
I want to be able to contact and/or track my child on the way to/from school. What should I do?	<i>As per the policy you are welcome to source and use their own tracking solution. This could be via a "brick" phone or separate tag style tracker.</i>
What will happen to a smart device if confiscated by the school?	<i>Items will be stored until the necessary collection/meeting has been agreed. The details of what will happen at each stage are in the policy above.</i>
What if a confiscation period would include a holiday (half term or longer break)	<i>In these circumstances devices will be available for collection on the last day of term prior to the break. You will be advised of the time slot in advance.</i>
What if a smart device is lost or damaged?	<i>As per this policy the school takes no responsibility for devices if confiscated. Smart devices are banned from the school site.</i>
How does this policy compare to other schools	<i>All schools will be legally required to ban smartphone access/use in schools. It is for individual schools to decide how the requirement operates and is implemented in their context. We are aware some other local schools are adopting the same approach as we are.</i>
Can staff still use their phones?	<i>Yes. The rules and expectations of staff are different to those for students.</i>

What if there is an emergency situation involving my child after the end of the school day?	<i>The main office in school is open until 5.00pm (Monday-Thursday) and 4.30pm on Fridays. Students can speak to staff or contact home via the office if they have no other mechanism for contacting home.</i>
What about train/bus travel tickets?	<i>Physical tickets for buses and trains are still available to purchase and use.</i>
What happens if my child's smart phone is confiscated immediately prior to a school break (half term/end of term holidays)	<i>For the period of holidays students will be able to have their smart device returned via the parent/carer collection process. However, if confiscation time is still owed students will be required to hand in their device on return from the school break, their parent/carer collecting it after the stated confiscation period has finished.</i>
When will you review/update this policy?	<i>All school policies are reviewed as part of our normal cycle of work and/or in response to changes to DFE published guidance.</i>