St. Mark's Catholic School

MOBILE PHONE POLICY

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1. Introduction and aims

Our Mission:

St Mark's is a Catholic community inspired by Gospel values where relationships are rooted in love. At the heart of our mission is a commitment to live out our faith and a dedication to embrace excellence in all that we do. We believe in education that instils possibilities, transforms lives and enables all to fulfil their potential.

At St Mark's Catholic School we recognise that mobile phones and similar devices, including smartphones, are an important part of everyday life for our pupils, parents/carers and staff, as well as the wider school community.

Our policy aims to:

- Promote safe and responsible phone use
- Set clear guidelines for the use of mobile phones for pupils, staff, parents/carers, visitors and volunteers
- Support the school's other policies, especially those related to child protection and behaviour

This policy also aims to address some of the challenges posed by mobile phones in school, such as:

- Risks to child protection
- Data protection issues
- Potential for lesson disruption
- Risk of theft, loss, or damage
- Appropriate use of technology in the classroom

Note: throughout this policy, 'mobile phones' refers to mobile phones and similar devices.

2. Relevant guidance

This policy has been developed with regard to the Department for Education's statutory guidance Mobile phones in schools, which schools are expected to follow from 1 September 2026. It should be read alongside the school's Behaviour Policy, Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, Online Safety/Acceptable Use Policy and Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE).

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 Staff

All staff (including teachers, support staff and supply staff) are responsible for consistently enforcing this policy.

Volunteers, or anyone else otherwise engaged by the school, must alert a member of staff if they witness, or are aware of, a breach of this policy.

The headteacher is responsible for monitoring the policy every 2 years, reviewing it, and holding staff and pupils accountable for its implementation.

Staff will address any questions or concerns from parents/carers quickly, and clearly communicate the reasons for prohibiting the use of mobile phones.

4. Use of Mobile Phones by Staff

The school recognises that staff may occasionally need to use mobile devices to support their professional duties. However, in line with the Department for Education's guidance on mobile phone use in schools, staff must ensure that mobile phones are used appropriately and do not disrupt learning or compromise safeguarding, professional standards, or data protection requirements.

Staff must not use personal mobile phones for personal purposes in front of pupils during the school day.

4.1 Personal Mobile Phones

Staff (including volunteers, contractors and any other individuals engaged by the school) must not use their personal mobile phones for personal purposes while pupils are present.

Personal use of mobile phones should normally be restricted to:

- non-contact time, and
- areas where pupils are not present, such as staff offices or the staffroom.
- Staff should not check personal messages, social media, or make personal calls in front of pupils.

There may be exceptional circumstances where a member of staff needs to keep their mobile phone accessible during contact time for personal reasons. Examples may include:

- emergency contact relating to their child or their child's school
- urgent matters relating to dependents or close family members

Any such arrangements should be agreed in advance with the headteacher or a member of the senior leadership team.

Where no special arrangements are in place, the school number 020 8577 3600 should be used as the emergency contact point.

4.2 Professional Use of Personal Devices

Staff may use their personal mobile phone to access school systems where this supports their professional duties. This may include accessing:

- SIMS or other school information systems
- school email
- Google Workspace (including Google Drive, Google Docs or Google Sheets)

Such use is permitted provided that appropriate security measures are in place and the device is used responsibly.

Staff must ensure that:

- The device is protected by a strong passcode, PIN or biometric lock
- Automatic screen locking is enabled
- The device uses device encryption where available
- School accounts are accessed using secure passwords and multi-factor authentication where available
- Devices are not left unattended while logged into school systems
- Personal devices are not shared with others while logged into school systems
- Confidential information is not downloaded or stored locally on the device

Accessing student information through secure school systems is permitted where this forms part of a staff member's professional role.

4.3 Photography and Recording

Staff must not use personal mobile phones to take photographs, video recordings or audio recordings of pupils.

Where images or recordings of pupils are required for legitimate school purposes (for example educational activities, displays or school communication), staff must use school-approved devices or systems and follow the school's photography and consent procedures.

Images or recordings must not be stored on personal devices.

4.4 Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Staff must not enter identifiable pupil data, personal data, or confidential school information into generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools such as ChatGPT, Google Gemini or similar systems.

If AI tools are used to support professional work, staff must ensure that:

- no identifiable pupil information is entered
- no confidential school data is entered
- outputs are reviewed carefully before use.

4.5 Data Protection

All staff must ensure that personal data is handled in accordance with:

- the school's Data Protection Policy
- the ICT Acceptable Use Policy
- the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)

Staff are responsible for ensuring that personal devices used to access school systems are secure and used in a manner that protects the confidentiality of pupil and staff information. DfE's non-statutory mobile phone guidance says that staff should not use their own mobile phone for personal reasons in front of pupils throughout the school day.

4.6 Safeguarding

Staff must not share their personal contact details with pupils or parents/carers. This includes personal:

- phone numbers
- email addresses
- social media accounts

- messaging apps (for example WhatsApp, Instagram, Snapchat or similar platforms)

Communication with pupils or parents/carers must take place through approved school systems, such as school email addresses or the school office.

If direct contact is required, it should normally be made via the school office or other authorised school communication channels.

- Social Media and Messaging Platforms
- Staff must not communicate with pupils through personal social media accounts or messaging platforms.
- Staff must not:
- send or accept friend requests from pupils on personal social media accounts
- communicate with pupils through personal messaging services
- create or participate in personal messaging groups with pupils unless explicitly authorised for a specific educational purpose.

Staff should also avoid forming personal social media connections with former pupils, particularly where there has been a recent professional relationship.

Professional networking platforms such as LinkedIn may be used where the purpose is clearly professional. Interactions must remain appropriate and maintain professional boundaries.

4.7 Public Availability of Contact Details

Staff should take reasonable steps to ensure that their personal contact details are not publicly accessible online.

Staff should avoid publishing personal phone numbers, email addresses or other contact details on publicly accessible websites or social media platforms where they could be accessed by pupils or parents/carers.

Staff should ensure that privacy settings on personal social media accounts are configured appropriately.

4.8 Sanctions

Staff that fail to adhere to this policy may face disciplinary action.

See the school's staff disciplinary policy for more information.

5. Use of mobile phones by pupils

5.1 Rationale

The school's approach reflects national guidance and the school's commitment to creating a calm, safe and focused learning environment.

Research and experience across schools show that restricting mobile phones during the school day helps to:

- reduce distractions from learning
- support positive social interaction between pupils
  reduce incidents of online bullying and conflict during the school day

- protect pupils from the misuse of cameras, messaging and social media
- support pupils' wellbeing by allowing them to focus on learning and face-to-face communications

For these reasons, the school has adopted a clear and consistent rule that pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 must not bring mobile phones to school.

Pupils will be reminded of the policy and sanctions at the start of each academic year and periodically thereafter

Parents and carers who need to contact their child during the school day should do so through the school office, and messages will be passed on where appropriate.

5.2 Mobile Phones

Pupils in Years 7–11 must not bring mobile phones to school.

Mobile phones must not be brought onto school premises under any circumstances, including if the device is switched off or kept in a bag.

Pupils who travel to and from school with a mobile phone should make arrangements to leave the device at home or with a parent or carer before arriving at school.

5.3 Exceptions

Exceptions to this rule may be made only in limited circumstances where there is a clear medical or safeguarding need.

Examples may include medical monitoring systems that require connection to a mobile device, such as continuous glucose monitoring for diabetes.

Any exception must be agreed in advance with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or a member of the senior leadership team.

Where an exception is granted, the school will agree specific arrangements with the pupil and their parents/carers regarding how the device will be managed during the school day.

5.4 Smartwatches and Other Smart Devices

For the purposes of this policy, the term **mobile phone includes devices with communication or smart technology**, including smartwatches.

Smartwatches or similar devices that allow:

- messaging
- calls
- internet access
- recording or photography
- connection to mobile networks

are not permitted in school for pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4. Simple watches that only tell the time are permitted.

5.5 Responsibility for Devices

Where a pupil brings a mobile phone or other prohibited device to school in breach of this policy, they do so **at their own risk**.

The school cannot accept responsibility for the **loss, damage or theft** of such items.

5.6 Mobile Phones – Sixth Form Pupils

Sixth-form pupils are permitted to bring mobile phones to school in recognition of their increased independence and responsibility. However, their use must not undermine the school's no mobile phone policy for pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4.

Sixth form pupils must ensure that their use of mobile phones does not compromise the expectations placed on younger pupils or the calm and orderly environment of the school.

5.6.1 Use of Mobile Phones

Sixth form pupils may use mobile phones only in designated sixth form areas, including:

- Maggie's
- the sixth form area

Mobile phones must not be used or visible in other areas of the school. Phones should be put away before entering the main school site and must not be used while moving around the school. Sixth form pupils should not walk around the school with mobile phones visible or in use.

5.6.2 Use in Lessons

Mobile phones must not be used in lessons unless explicit permission is given by the class teacher for a specific educational purpose. If permission is given, phones must only be used in line with the teacher's instructions.

5.6.3 Headphones and Earphones

Headphones, earphones and wireless devices such as AirPods must not be worn around the school site. These devices may only be used within designated sixth form areas. They must be removed and stored away when leaving those areas or when entering classrooms.

5.6.4 Expectations of Sixth Form Pupils

Sixth-form pupils are expected to act as positive role models for younger pupils.

They must ensure that their use of mobile phones and personal devices does not undermine the expectations placed on pupils in other year groups.

5.6.5 Breaches of the Policy

Misuse of mobile phones or headphones by sixth-form pupils will result in sanctions in line with the school's behaviour policy. Repeated breaches may lead to further restrictions on mobile phone use.

5.7 Sanctions

If a pupil brings a mobile phone or prohibited smart device to school in breach of this policy, the device will be confiscated by a member of staff.

Confiscated devices will be:

- taken to the school office
- stored securely in the **school safe**
- recorded in line with school procedures.

The device will not be returned to the pupil. It must be collected by a parent or carer, normally on the next school day.

Repeated breaches of this policy may result in additional sanctions in accordance with the school's behaviour policy.

The school is permitted to confiscate mobile phones under sections 91 and 94 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

5.8 Educational Visits and Residential Trips

The principles of this policy apply to educational visits and other school-organised activities taking place away from the school site.

As a general rule, pupils in Years 7–11 should not bring mobile phones on educational visits. Where there is a reason for different arrangements to apply, these must be agreed by the Headteacher and communicated to pupils and parents/carers in advance.

Different arrangements will normally apply to residential visits, where pupils may be permitted to bring mobile phones. The school may place restrictions on when phones can be used and will normally require phones to be handed to staff for safekeeping overnight.

For activities where access to a mobile phone may form part of the safety or communication arrangements, such as Duke of Edinburgh's Award expeditions, appropriate arrangements will be determined by the Visit Leader and agreed through the school's educational visits approval process.

5.9 Searching and Safeguarding

In certain circumstances, staff may search a pupil's mobile phone where there is a reasonable suspicion that it contains material that could cause harm or where it may have been used to commit an offence, in line with the Department for Education's guidance on searching, screening and confiscation.

If inappropriate or harmful content is discovered, the school will follow its safeguarding procedures. This may include involving the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and, where appropriate, external agencies such as the police. Any search of a phone will follow DfE guidance

This may include situations involving:

- the sharing of nude or semi-nude images
- bullying or harassment
- threats of violence
- abusive messages or online behaviour
- any content that may place a pupil at risk of harm.

All sanctions applied will be **reasonable and proportionate**, and the school will take account of any relevant circumstances, including a pupil's age, special educational needs or disability.

6. Use of mobile phones by parents/carers, volunteers and visitors

Parents/carers, visitors and volunteers (including governors and contractors) must adhere to this policy as it relates to staff if they are on the school site during the school day.

Parents/carers, visitors and volunteers will be informed of the rules for mobile phone use when they sign in at reception or attend a public event at school.

Parents/carers must use the school office as the first point of contact if they need to get in touch with their child during the school day. They must not try to contact their child on their personal mobile during the school day.

7. Monitoring and review

The school is committed to ensuring that this policy has a positive impact on pupils' education, behaviour and welfare. When reviewing the policy, the school will take into account:

- Feedback from parents/carers and pupils
- Feedback from staff
- Records of behaviour and safeguarding incidents
- Relevant advice from the Department for Education, the local authority and any other relevant organisations

If there are any concerns regarding this policy, these should be brought to the attention of the DSL in a timely manner.

Appendix 1 Staff guidance

Staff Mobile Phone Guidance

Our aim is to maintain **professional boundaries, safeguard pupils and protect staff** while recognising that staff may occasionally need to access school systems on personal devices.

Key Expectations

Personal phone use

Do not use personal phones **for personal reasons in front of pupils**.
Personal calls, messages and social media should only be used during **non-contact time** and **away from pupils**.

Professional use

Staff may use phones to access **school systems** such as: SIMS / school email Google Drive / Docs / Sheets

This should only be done **for professional purposes**.

Keep devices secure

If you access school systems on your phone:

- Use a **passcode or biometric lock**
- Ensure **automatic screen lock** is enabled
- Do not leave your phone **unattended while logged in**
- Do not **download or store student data** on your device

Photography and recording

Personal phones must **not be used to photograph or record pupils**. If images are needed for school purposes, use **school-approved devices and systems only**.

Social media and communication

Staff must **not communicate with pupils through personal social media or messaging apps**.

- Do not accept friend requests from pupils
- Avoid connecting with **former pupils on personal accounts**
- Professional platforms such as **LinkedIn** may be used appropriately

Key principle

If you are unsure whether something is appropriate, ask yourself: **Would I be comfortable if this were seen by a parent, pupil or colleague?**

If unsure, check with a member of **SLT or the DSL**