

Mobile Phone and Communication Policy

This policy is for Staff, Visitors, Volunteers and Pupils, including all forms of Smart 'communication' Technology

Paper copies of this policy are available free of charge from the school office. It is also published on the school web site.

This guidance should be seen as a safeguard for members of staff, the school, visitors, volunteers and pupils and the Local Authority.

Failure to comply with the policy is likely to result in the enforcement of the Whistleblowing policy and associated disciplinary procedures.

Introduction

Mobile phone technology has advanced significantly over the last few years - and it continues to evolve, including the use of Smart Watches. Wireless connections in particular have extended the capabilities of mobile phone devices, enabling access to a wide range of new content and services globally. Many phone/communication devices now offer Internet and email access, alongside the most often standard functions of messaging, camera, video and sound recording.

Mobile phones, alongside other forms of 'smart' technology are changing the way and speed in which we communicate. They can provide security and reassurance; however, there are also associated risks.

Children and young people need to understand these risks in order to help them develop appropriate strategies for keeping themselves safe.

***For the purposes of this policy all forms of Smart Watches having video, text and voice options are considered as 'mobile' technology.**

Aim

The aim of this Policy is to support safe and appropriate practice through establishing clear and robust acceptable use guidelines.

This is achieved through balancing protection against potential misuse with the recognition that mobile communication devices are effective communication tools - which in turn can contribute to safeguarding practice and protection.

Scope

This policy applies to all individuals who have access to personal or work-related mobile communication devices on site. This includes staff, volunteers, children, young people, parents/carers, visitors and community users. This list is not exhaustive.

Policy statement

It is recognised that it is the enhanced functions of many mobile communication devices that cause the most concern, and which are most susceptible to misuse. Misuse includes the taking and distribution of indecent images, exploitation and cyber bullying.

It is also recognised that mobile communication devices can cause an unnecessary distraction during the working day and can be intrusive when used in the company of others.

When mobile communication devices are misused it can impact on an individual's dignity, privacy and right to confidentiality. Such concerns are not exclusive to children and young people; hence there is a duty to protect the needs and vulnerabilities of all.

It is appreciated that it can be very difficult to detect when such devices are present or being used, particularly in relation to enhanced functions, such as cameras. The use of all mobile communication devices is therefore limited, regardless of their capabilities. The aim is to avoid

distraction and disruption of the working day, and to minimise the opportunities for any individual to make any covert images or misuse functions in any other way.

Designated '**mobile communication device free**' areas situated within the setting are

- All classrooms/corridors
- Resource rooms/medical rooms
- Playgrounds/school grounds
- Changing areas
- Toilets

A zero-tolerance policy is in place with regards to the use of personal or work-related mobile communication devices by any individual in these areas.

Designated '**mobile communication device use**' areas situated within the setting are

- Staff room
- School office
- Headteacher's office
- Deputy Head's office
- Conference room - meetings and dinner breaks

The aim of this Policy is to help practitioners:

- have a clear understanding of what constitutes misuse.
- be vigilant and alert to potential warning signs.
- know how to minimise risk.
- avoid putting themselves into compromising situations which could be misinterpreted and lead to allegations.
- understand the need for professional boundaries and clear guidance regarding acceptable use.
- be responsible for self-moderation of their own behaviours.
- be aware of the importance of reporting concerns promptly.

An agreement of trust is therefore promoted regarding the carrying and use of mobile phones within the setting environment, which is agreed to by all practitioners.

Procedures:

Personal mobile communication devices. Guidance to avoid the use of these devices causing unnecessary disruptions and distractions within the workplace, and to ensure effective safeguarding practice is promoted to protect against potential misuse.

In the interests of equality, and to further promote safety, the guidance applies to any individual who has a mobile communication device on site, including children, parents and visitors, as detailed below:

Pupils:

- Pupils are **NOT allowed** mobile communication devices in school. We ask parents to support this by ensuring their children do not bring them.
- Any pupil mobile communication device found in school will be: -
 - Switched off
 - Kept in the office
 - Returned to parents / carers via the taxi escort at home time.

Staff, Volunteers and Students:

- **SLT/office staff** are to keep devices within the school office/head's office/ deputy's office (access to phones needed for emergency procedures and CPOMS authenticator)
- **Staff, Volunteers & Students are not to use the school's Wi-Fi to access the internet for personal use, but instead use their own 4/5G services.**

- **Staff, Volunteers & Students** mobile communication devices to be switched off / silenced and stored securely.
- **Staff, Volunteers & Students** are able to use their devices at break/dinner times in the designated 'safe' areas only.
- If appropriate - staff may use devices in meetings/dinner in the conference room.
- If a staff member has an emergency, they may leave their phone with the school office to answer on their behalf or seek specific permissions to use their phone at other than break times. In such times a private space can be provided away from pupils and teaching areas.
- **Staff, Volunteers & Students** should not use personally-owned devices to take photos or videos or make audio recordings of students and will only use work-provided equipment for this purpose.
- In an emergency where a staff member needs to make an urgent phone call and doesn't have access to a school-owned device, they should use their own device and hide (by inputting 141) their own mobile number for confidentiality purposes and then report the incident with the Headteacher.
- **Staff, Volunteers & Students** are not permitted to use their own personal devices for contacting children, young people and their families within or outside of the setting unless authorised by a member of the SLT.

Visitors and Contractors:

- Are respectfully requested not to use their mobile communication devices in any of the designated mobile communication device free areas.
- Should phone calls and/or texts need to be taken or made, use is restricted to those areas not accessed by children in order to avoid any unnecessary disturbance or disruption to others. Those areas are as follows:
 - School Reception area
 - School office
 - Conference room
- Should phone calls needed to be taken or made by a contractor then he will be asked to do this in the school office order to avoid any unnecessary disturbance or disruption to others.
- Under no circumstances is **any** individual permitted to take images or make audio / image recordings on a mobile communication device.
- Any individual bringing a personal device into the setting **must** ensure that it contains no inappropriate or illegal content.

Parents /Carers:

Parents / carers are not permitted to use their mobile communication devices while on school premises or grounds. We ask parents to respect school's safeguarding procedures whilst on site.

All parents/carers are given information on this policy using, verbal reminders, leaflets, availability on web site or paper copies available from the school office on request.

- Parents are respectfully requested not to use their mobile phones. Royal Cross is a designated '**mobile communication device free**' area.
- **Parents and visitors are not to use the school's Wi-Fi to access the internet for personal use, but instead use their own 4/5G services.**
- Should phone calls need to be taken or made then parents will be taken to the designated areas.
 - School Reception area
 - School office
 - Conference room – if they are in a meeting.
- Any individual bringing a personal device into the setting **must** ensure that it contains no inappropriate or illegal content.

Productions/Events/Meetings.

- We do not allow parents to photograph or video school events such as shows or sports day using their mobile communication devices – we arrange to take photos and share them with families after school events free of charge.
- Parents are politely reminded verbally at the start of any event and in writing – on invitations, reminders and programmes.

Exceptions for Parents:

With the Headteacher's permission exception are allowed as follows:

- PTFA meetings – parents/carers are respectfully asked to switch off their devices and to keep them in bags. Should phone calls and/or texts need to be taken or made, use is restricted to
 - School Reception area
 - School office
 - Conference room – if in a meeting
- Failure to adhere to the contents of this policy will lead to safe guarding procedures being followed and the restriction of mobile communication device use at meetings.

Mobile phones (SLT and Off Site Educational Visit Lead):

The use of mobile phones is promoted as:

- An essential part of the emergency toolkit which is taken on off-site trips, including residential.
- A back-up facility should problems be experienced with the landline – or where contact needs to be made outside of work hours.

Driving:

- If any practitioner is required to drive in a working capacity, the phone must be switched off whilst driving.
- Under no circumstances should practitioners drive whilst taking/making a phone call. This also applies to hands- free and wireless connections, which are considered a distraction rather than a safer alternative.

Safe storage:

- A designated safe and secure area for practitioners/students to store their personal devices during the working day is available.
- Practitioners/students leave their belongings in safe storage at their own risk. It is therefore recommended that phones are security marked, password protected and insured. No liability for loss and damages is accepted.
- As well as safeguarding children and avoiding any unnecessary disruptions during the day, this procedure also aims to protect staff against any unfounded allegations.

Emergency contact:

It is recognised that mobile phones provide direct contact to others, and at times provide a necessary reassurance due to their ease of access, particularly at stressful times. The SLT recognise and support that at certain times staff may have family emergencies and so will need to be contactable during the school day, at these times: -

- Staff may leave their phone (switched on) with the school office to answer on their behalf and use at other than break / dinner times.
- Alternatively, staff may leave the school office phone number as an emergency contact number.
- In all emergencies, office staff / SLT **will bring staff** to answer all calls.
- Staff will be invited to make/take calls in the Headteacher's, Deputies or school's main office if privacy is needed.

This policy will be monitored and reviewed as required in line with evolving technological advancements.