

Shipston High School

Mobile Phone Policy

September 2026

Review date: Sept 2027

Mobile Phone Policy

Aims

This policy aims to set out the school's position in relation to student and staff use of mobile technology on the school site. More widely, the policy aims to support our students' success and happiness in school, encouraging positive habits and routines when it comes to the use of technology.

Introduction

Shipston High School is committed to creating a calm, purposeful, and inclusive learning environment where every student can thrive. Smart devices play a central role in modern life, but during the school day, research and experience show they can also be a significant source of distraction to learning, social interaction, and emotional wellbeing.

Adults at the school regularly witness the cumulative, adverse effects that smartphones and social media can have on young people. In addition to this, as a school we recognise the challenges many families face in managing smartphone use at home. This policy reflects our shared responsibility to address these concerns and protect student wellbeing.

Rationale (references to relevant research are included at the end of this policy):

- **Mental Health** – since 2010, when smartphones and social media became mainstream, there has been a sharp rise in youth mental health concerns, including anxiety, self-harm, and depression. Leading research suggests that this correlation is no coincidence, and that the constant connectivity and pressures of social media are contributing significantly to this trend. Recent decisions to ban social media for under-16s are underpinned by this research.
- **Addiction and Dependency** – social media platforms are designed to be addictive. The average amount of screentime use per day for a UK teenager is over 8 hours. This pattern of use is detrimental to both academic focus and self-esteem.
- **Reduced Attention Spans** – Extensive smartphone use is altering brain development and impairing children's ability to focus, retain information, and engage in sustained learning. By reducing distractions, we aim to preserve and strengthen students' attention and cognitive skills, as well as build long-term habits and self-regulation around technology.
- **Exposure to Inappropriate Content** – Whilst the forthcoming social media ban in England (Spring 2027) should reduce the impact of exposure to inappropriate content, it will unlikely eliminate it completely, particularly in the early stages of the ban. Presently, children are often exposed to harmful content, including pornography and graphic violence, at a very young age. Additionally, they face risks such as online grooming, cyberbullying, and social pressure to behave in ways they would not offline.

Legislation and Statutory Guidance

This policy is written in-line with and adheres to the following:

- Behaviour in Schools (Department for Education, February 2024)
- Mobile Phones in School (Department for Education, February 2026)
- Searching, Screening and Confiscation (Department for Education, July 2022)
- National legislation and statutory guidance: Section 91 and Section 94 of the Education and Inspections Act (2006)
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Specifically, the guidance titled 'Mobile Phones in Schools' states:

"All schools should be mobile phone-free environments by default; anything other than this should be by exception only."

"Schools should develop a mobile phone policy that prohibits the use of mobile phones and other smart technology with similar functionality to mobile phones, throughout the school day, including during lessons, the time between lessons, breaktimes and lunchtime."

By drawing on this research, Shipston High School aims to help students:

- Focus more deeply in lessons
- Enjoy more meaningful, face-to-face social time
- Develop self-regulation and independence
- Build balanced, sustainable digital habits that support wellbeing and success

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Anti-Bullying and Anti-Hate
- Behaviour
- Child Protection Policy and Procedures
- Data Protection and Protection of Biometric Information
- Online Safety
- PSHE
- Relationships and Sex Education
- School Exclusion
- Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities
- Supporting Students with Medical Conditions

Definitions

Mobile Device

In the remainder of this policy, the term '**mobile device**' refers to any of the following:

- A mobile phone
- Airpods/Earphones/Headphones
- A smartwatch
- Any device with internet connectivity that is not provided through the school

School Site

- In the remainder of this policy, the term 'school site' does not include being on a school coach.

School-Approved mobile devices

Once Blackout has been rolled out this term (autumn term, 2026), parents and carers who wish their child to carry a mobile phone for safety when travelling to and from school may do so only under the following conditions:

- The mobile device has the Blackout app downloaded and active.
- The mobile device is a 'brick' phone (with no internet or camera functionality).

Key expectations

Students

- At all times on the school site, ahead of the Blackout roll out, mobile devices must be switched off and placed in students' bags where they must remain until the student has left the site. This will be checked at line-up each morning.
- Implementation of the Blackout App will be phased in to ensure strong home/school communication and high levels of compliance. Once checked at morning line-up, mobile devices remain in students' bags at all times during the school day. Once rolled out, staff will check the Blackout App is active.
- From October 2026, only phones with the Blackout app activated or 'brick phones' will be school-approved. No other phones are allowed on the school site.
- The only four exceptions to mobile devices being in bags are either of the following:
 - After 3:15pm and once off the school site, or
 - As a student is boarding a school coach, or
 - If a student has a medical condition/SEND reasonable adjustment that is documented with the school, in which case a mobile device may be used for this sole purpose.
 - On Educational Visits, at the discretion of the Trip Leader.

Staff

- All staff are responsible for ensuring the implementation of the above expectations, including sanctioning students for non-compliance as appropriate.
- There are likely to be occasions where it is necessary for a member of staff to use a mobile device around school for reasons connected to their work, however, staff should:
 - avoid this if possible.

- never use their own mobile device for personal reasons in front of students whilst on site, unless in exceptional circumstances. (In the case of exceptional circumstances, the member of staff should alert their line manager of the reason in advance).

Liability for Mobile Devices

The school will make every effort to ensure that confiscated items are retained securely, however, the school accepts no liability, nor will the school offer financial compensation, for any loss of, or damage to, a mobile device that is confiscated in-line with this policy.

Students with a medical condition

Parents must inform the school if a smartphone is needed for medical reasons.

Contacting home in an emergency

All contact home should be via the school office. Only in genuine emergencies should students ever bypass the office. If this allowance is misused, the consequences for non-compliance apply.

Consequences for non-compliance (school-approved phones)

- First offence – the device will be confiscated and stored securely in the school office until the end of the day. A clear warning will be issued regarding any subsequent non-compliance.
- Second offence – the device will be confiscated and stored securely in the school office. It can only be collected by a parent/carer and the earliest it can be collected is the Friday of the week of confiscation. The school office is open between 8:00am and 3:30pm.
- Third offence – extended sanctions (including a possible longer-term confiscation) and parental meeting.

If a student refuses to have the device confiscated, it will lead to a suspension from school, for refusal to follow the instructions of a member of staff (Ref: School Behaviour Policy) and the parent/carer will need to hand in the device at the subsequent reintegration.

Consequences for non-compliance (school-non-approved phones)

If a student brings a school-non-approved mobile device onto the school site it would be confiscated if seen or heard by a staff member:

- First offence – the device will be confiscated and stored securely in the school office. It can only be collected by a parent/carer and the earliest it can potentially be collected is the Friday of the week of confiscation. The school office is open between 8:00am and

3:30pm. At this stage a senior staff member will meet with the parent or carer and the device may be returned that day rather than after the minimum 2-week confiscation. This will only happen if a home/school agreement is made. This agreement will entail the Blackout App being installed then and there and will outline the consequences should the agreement not be adhered to. This document will be signed by school, home and the student. Failing this agreement, the device will remain stored securely in the school office for the remainder of the minimum 2-week confiscation period applicable for school-non-approved mobile devices.

- Second offence – Any school-non-approved mobile device will be kept by the school for a minimum period of 2 weeks from the date they were confiscated. This retention period includes weekends and school holidays and will not be shortened due to term breaks, early collection requests, or family circumstances. At the end of this period, again a meeting will be offered with a view to working together to ensure the mobile device becomes a school-approved mobile device.
- SIM cards will remain inside the device for the full duration of the confiscation period.
- If a student refuses to have the device confiscated, it will lead to a suspension from school, for refusal to follow the instructions of a member of staff (Ref: School Behaviour Policy) and the parent/carers will need to hand in the device at the subsequent reintegration.

Blackout and education policy

Blackout supports schools in meeting key national guidance and priorities, including:

- Behaviour in Schools (DfE, 2022) – providing structure, consistency, and support for positive behaviour.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE, 2025) – embedding digital safeguarding measures.
- Education Endowment Foundation guidance – reducing low-level disruption to maximise learning time.
- Curriculum and Assessment Review for 2028 (DfE, 2025) - embedding responsible technology use and digital wellbeing into that framework.

By aligning with these frameworks, Blackout helps us ensure that our digital wellbeing strategies are not only effective but also evidence-based and compliant with expectations set out for all schools.

References to Relevant Research

- Sohn, S. Y., et al. (2019). *Prevalence of problematic smartphone usage and associated mental health outcomes amongst children and young people: A systematic review, meta-analysis and GRADE of the evidence*. BMC Psychiatry.
- Girela-Serrano, B., et al. (2022). *Impact of mobile phones and wireless devices use on children and adolescents' mental health: A systematic review*. European Child & Adolescent Psychiatry.
- Twenge, J. M., & Campbell, W. K. (2018). *Associations between screen time and lower psychological well-being among children and adolescents*. Preventive Medicine Reports.
- Twenge, J. M., Joiner, T. E., Rogers, M. L., & Martin, G. N. (2018). *Increases in depressive symptoms, suicide-related outcomes, and suicide rates among U.S. adolescents after 2010*. Clinical Psychological Science.
- Domoff, S. E., et al. (2019). *Problematic use of mobile phones in adolescents: Relations with sleep, anxiety, and depression*.
- Scott, H., et al. (2019). *Social media use and adolescent sleep patterns and mental health*.
- Bozzola, E., et al. (2022). *The use of smartphones and children: A systematic review*. Italian Journal of Pediatrics.
- Horwood, S., & Anglim, J. (2019). *Problematic smartphone usage and subjective and psychological well-being: A meta-analysis*. Computers in Human Behavior.
- Radesky, J. S., et al. (2020). *Digital media and developmental health*.