

Electronic Device Policy 2026/2027

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Aims linked to the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act April 2026

The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act is rooted in a simple but urgent belief: that every child should be safe, supported, and able to succeed. For schools, the Act brings greater consistency and clarity. The government has long been clear that mobile phones have no place in schools, and through the Act, all schools will be required to follow that guidance, giving teachers and parents clarity and consistency across the country. Now guidance is clear that schools are expected to implement and consistently enforce policies, supporting teachers to maintain calm, focused classrooms.

This policy underpins a school environment free from the distraction and disruption caused by mobile devices. As stated in research, mobile phones present significant classroom management challenges, negatively impact upon student focus, and can facilitate cheating and inappropriate behaviours. By prohibiting use, we foster an environment optimised for student learning and social interaction.

Research literature states, 'Screens degrade attention, learning community and mental health. Ensuring extended spans of time when students are reliably screen free- not merely not using them but with screen actually not present- is necessary to rebuilding attention, optimizing learning and maximising social well-being.' (*Reconnect by Lemov, Lewis, Williams, Frazier p.16*)

Compliance with National Guidance

This policy reflects the expectations set out in guidance from the UK Department for Education (DfE) regarding mobile phone use in schools. This guidance advises that schools should be **mobile phone-free environments by default**, with any exceptions considered only in limited and clearly defined circumstances.

In line with national guidance and the school's behaviour policy, the use of mobile phones and other smart technology with similar functionality (for example, devices capable of sending or receiving notifications or messages via mobile networks or recording audio or video) is prohibited throughout the school day. This includes **everywhere on the school site including during lessons, movement between lessons, break times and at the beginning and end of the school day.**

This approach follows the expectations outlined in DfE 'Behaviour in Schools' guidance and contributes to establishing a **calm, safe and supportive environment** that is conducive to teaching and learning. It also aligns with safeguarding expectations set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education, ensuring that the school maintains clear systems that protect the welfare and safety of all students and staff.

The school expects the full cooperation and support of parents and carers to ensure the effectiveness of this policy and to help students comply consistently with these expectations.

The school will review this policy periodically to ensure it remains aligned with national guidance, safeguarding responsibilities, and best practice and in response to any emerging themes.

Purpose

- To support a culture of disruption-free classrooms and maximise student learning, this means students being able to focus fully on tasks and to maintain that focus.
- Attention is central to every learning task and quality of attention paid by learners shapes the outcome of the learning endeavour. Learning tasks require sustained concentration and focus, often for significant periods of time.
- By restricting electronic device use within school time, we support students to have the capacity for sustained periods of concentration because mobile phones train students to fracture their own attention.
- To support students arriving to lessons on time.
- To encourage a learning environment where students positively and respectfully engage with each other and build positive face to face relationships, without the distraction of electronic devices.
- To encourage students to be responsible for their own actions and belongings.
- To create a safe environment for both staff and students where online behaviour and conduct meets the school expectations.
- To provide opportunities for social interaction where communication and the building of relationships contribute towards developing a sense of belonging to the school community

Electronic Device Expectations

Plymstock School is a no electronic devices school. From the point at which students enter the school site in the morning until they leave the school site, electronic devices are not permitted to be used. This extends to **smart glasses, smart watches (connected to mobile phones) and invisible earpieces.**

Electronic devices should be **turned off and in rucksacks** before students enter the school site (entrance gates) and not used until the end of the day **after leaving the school site** through the **Entrance Gate, ECO Gate or Wren's Gate.**

Our policy follows a, '**We see it, We hear it, You lose it**' approach. This includes being visible in blazer, coat, shorts and trouser pockets.

Areas Where Electronic Devices May Be Used

Electronic devices may be used **before entering the school site and after leaving the school site via the exit gates (Front gate, ECO gate, Wren's gate).**

During the school day, electronic devices may only be used by Sixth Form students **within designated Sixth Form areas**, specifically the **Sixth Form common room.**

In very exceptional circumstances, devices may also be permitted for use **in an office area when directly supervised by a member of staff to enable contact with a parent/carer.**

Adaptations and Reasonable Adjustments

The school recognises that, while mobile phones are prohibited during the school day to minimise distraction and disruption to learning, there may be circumstances where adaptations to this policy are necessary. The school will ensure that its approach complies with its legal duties, including the requirement to make reasonable adjustments, where appropriate. Any reasonable adjustment will be based upon appropriate professional evidence and considered on an individual basis.

Under the Equality Act 2010, the school has a duty to take reasonable steps to avoid placing a disabled student at a substantial disadvantage because of its policies or practices. In some cases, this may include allowing a student

access to their mobile phone during the school day where it is necessary due to the nature of their disability or medical needs.

Examples of where reasonable adjustments or adaptations will be considered include:

- Students with medical conditions who require a mobile phone to monitor or manage their health.
- Students who use accessibility or assistive communication applications as a detailed part of their support needs.
- Students whose Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), medical care plan, or individual support plan identifies the use of a mobile phone as a necessary adjustment.
- Exceptional safeguarding, wellbeing, or medical circumstances agreed in advance with the school.

All requests for adaptations will be considered on a case-by-case basis and a plan will support their implementation so as not to undermine the policy, taking into account the individual needs of the student while ensuring that the school maintains a safe, calm, and focused learning environment for all.

Partnership with Parents and Carers

The school relies on the support and cooperation of parents and carers to ensure that students remain **safe, focused and free from unnecessary distractions** during the school day. By working in partnership with the school, parents and carers help ensure that students **follow the school's electronic device (including mobile phones) and behaviour policies**, enabling a calm and supportive learning environment.

We do also share advice and guidance for parents and carers about safety online and safe use of mobile phones and the things children can access through a mobile phone.

Parent or Carer Contacting a Student During the School Day

The school recognises that parents or carers may very occasionally need to communicate with their child during the school day for urgent or important matters. To ensure safety and minimise disruption to learning, **parents and carers should contact the school reception** rather than attempting to contact students directly via mobile phone.

Reception staff will **take a message and ensure it is delivered at the most appropriate time** to the student. This process allows the school to manage communications efficiently while maintaining a calm and focused learning environment. In less urgent cases, students can pick up a message when they switch their phone on again after they have left the school site.

Student Contacting a Parent or Carer During the School Day

The school recognises that students may occasionally need to contact a parent or carer during the school day. To maintain a safe and distraction-free environment, students **must not use their mobile phones** for such contact. If a student needs to contact a parent or carer, they should **speak to a member of pastoral staff or visit the school reception at break**, who will assist them in making the call or sending a message. This ensures that students can communicate as necessary while continuing to comply with the mobile phone-free policy.

One way of avoiding the need for contact to be made is to frequently review the balance on ParentPay. Where a child does not have enough money, contact can be made through reception.

Use of Electronic Devices in Lessons

The school operates as a **phone-free environment for the entire school day**. This includes before and after the school day, during lessons, the time between lessons and at break times. Students must not access or use mobile phones or similar smart devices at any point during the school day unless explicitly authorised by a member of staff for exceptional reasons.

This approach reflects national guidance from the Department for Education, which states that schools should prohibit the use of mobile phones throughout the school day in order to maintain calm, safe and purposeful learning environments and to reduce distraction and disruption to teaching and learning.

Within lessons, students are expected to engage fully with learning using the resources and equipment provided by the school. Mobile phones must not be used for any purpose during lessons. This includes, but is not limited to:

- using phones as calculators;
- conducting internet research;
- accessing online learning platforms;
- taking photographs, recording audio or video;
- sending or receiving messages.

National guidance makes clear that in a phone-free school environment it is **not appropriate for phones to be used as calculators or for research during lessons**, as this undermines consistent expectations and can lead to distraction and disruption. Teachers will provide or direct students to appropriate school resources where digital tools are required for learning. Where technology is needed, this will be through approved school systems or devices in line with the school's ICT and acceptable use policy. All staff are responsible for consistently upholding these expectations so that classrooms remain focused, safe and free from unnecessary distractions.

Educational Benefits of Electronic Devices

The school recognises that digital technology can enhance teaching and learning when used appropriately. Electronic devices can provide access to high-quality resources, support research and collaboration, and help students develop essential digital literacy skills needed for education, employment and everyday life.

Where technology adds clear educational value, the school will provide **approved and supervised devices and systems** to support learning. This may include school computers, tablets and other authorised digital tools integrated into lessons.

To ensure technology supports learning without causing distraction, personal mobile phones and similar devices are not used during the school day. Instead, technology used for educational purposes will be **planned, directed and monitored by the school**, ensuring it contributes positively to students' learning and the wider school environment.

Repeat use of electronic device (Half Termly – Autumn, Spring, Summer)

1st occasion per half term term:

Staff issue a negative point on ClassCharts (electronic device breach)

Staff will instruct the student to hand in their device (Confiscation)

The item will be safely stored in the pastoral office, and students are expected to collect it at the end of the school day. Parent/carers will be made aware of the electronic device breach by ClassCharts.

2nd occasion per half term:

Staff issue a negative point on ClassCharts (electronic device breach)

Staff will instruct the student to hand in their device (Confiscation)

The item will be safely stored in the pastoral office, and students are expected to collect it at the end of the school day. Parent/carers will be made aware of the electronic device breach by ClassCharts.

Third occasion onwards:

Staff will continue to issue a negative point on Class Charts (electronic device breach) and will instruct the student to hand in their device (Confiscation). Parent/carers will be made aware of the electronic device breach by ClassCharts and will be required to collect the phone from school (reception) at their convenience.

Where a student requires their phone to access public transport home, the school will provide the money to support them being able to get home.

Where a parent is unable to collect the phone and the student requires the phone for safeguarding purposes to get home, the student will then be required to hand in their phone for a minimum of a school week (including the day of confiscation) and will be extended until the end of the half term where further confiscation occasion occur.

The above will reset at the start of each half term (Autumn, Spring & Summer)

Where a student refuses to hand their phone in the Behaviour Policy will be followed. This will likely include handing their phone in at the start of the day and collected at the end of the day for a set period, demonstrating they can meet the expectation.

At any point in the above cycle, parents can take action (for example, confiscation or restriction of use outside of school) themselves regarding their child's use of their mobile phone.

Refusal to cooperate

If a student refuses to hand over an electronic device that has not met the 'We see it, We hear it, You lose it' approach, a member of the Pastoral or Senior Leadership Team will then follow this up. This will result in confiscation of the phone and may result in a further consequence for non-compliance in line with the Behaviour Policy, including Internal Reflection, where appropriate.

Persistent misuse of electronic devices – Safety Plan

Where there are concerns regarding persistent or inappropriate misuse of electronic devices which are linked to safeguarding students and staff, it may be necessary to implement a safety plan. This is an agreed plan between the school, student and parent/carers which clearly identifies actions that will be taken to mitigate any known risks. It is likely that failure to adhere to the plan will result in a consequence.

If students adhere to the guidelines in this policy, there will be no further outcome for using an electronic device other than confiscation.

Electronic Device Use in the Sixth Form

The school recognises that Sixth Form education involves increasing independence and personal responsibility. In line with national guidance, limited access to mobile phones may therefore be permitted for Sixth Form students at specific times and in designated locations. Sixth Formers, as the most senior students in the school, are also key role models.

Sixth Form students may use their mobile phones **only within the designated Sixth Form area (the Sixth Form Block)**. Mobile phones must not be used in lessons, corridors, shared school spaces, or in areas where younger

students are present. This ensures that the school's phone-free expectations for the rest of the school are maintained and that younger students do not have to navigate different expectations around device use.

Sixth Form students must not use mobile phones **in front of younger students** and must ensure that devices remain out of sight when outside the designated Sixth Form area.

All Sixth Form students remain subject to the **school's behaviour policy**. Any misuse of a mobile phone, including use outside the permitted area or at inappropriate times, may result in the consequences in line with the school's electronic device policy and behaviour procedures and policy.

Electronic devices must not be used to:

- Store files or data which relate to an offence, or which may cause harm to another person. This includes, but is not limited to, indecent images of children, pornography, abusive messages, images or videos, or evidence relating to suspected criminal behaviour.
- Store and/access inappropriate/undesirable imagery or material, including those which promote pornography, violence or bullying of any description;
- Record, take or share images, video and audio on any electronic device (unless otherwise explicitly agreed by the Headteacher or a member of the Senior Leadership Team);
- Record, take or share any images, video and audio of other students or staff at the school.

School staff will search electronic devices should they be led to believe or consider there is potential for content to be related to any of the above points. It may be necessary for devices to be passed on to the Police.

It is the responsibility of students who use electronic devices in connection with school learning or school business to abide by the guidelines outlined in this document. It is a privilege to use such devices on the school premises and for school purposes and therefore, students who contravene these guidelines will lose the right to use any electronic devices on school premises or for school use outside the school.

As with all prohibited items, staff should first consider the appropriate safeguarding response if they find images, data or files on an electronic device that they reasonably suspect are likely to put a person at risk. Designated staff may examine any data or files on an electronic device they have confiscated because of a search, as defined in paragraph 57 of the Search and Screening guidance 2022, if there is good reason to do so.

Emergency situations

In case of an emergency, a student will be given permission to use their mobile phone under direct supervision only and this will take place in an office area where possible, but always under direct supervision

Students may be granted access to school telephones via the school offices should they need to contact a parent/carer or in the event of an emergency, but always under direct supervision of a staff member

Parents/carers are requested, in cases of emergency, to contact the school first so the school are aware of any potential issue and can make or support the necessary arrangements. The school reception remains a vital and appropriate point of contact and can ensure your child is reached quickly and assisted in any relevant way. Passing on messages through school reception also reduces the likelihood of inadvertently disrupting lessons and can ensure appropriate supervision.

Electronic devices that are found in the school and whose owner cannot be located should be handed to the school reception. The school accepts no responsibility for replacing lost, stolen or damaged electronic devices. The school accepts no responsibility for students who lose or have their electronic devices stolen or damaged while travelling to and from school.

School-led residential trips

School-led residential trips are an extension of the school's learning environment, and as such, all existing behaviour expectations and policies continue to apply throughout the duration of the trip. Unless specific requirements are made in the pre-visit information to support the visit, students are permitted to bring mobile phones and electronic devices for use during travel to and from the residential venue. Devices may also be used during the day while on the residential, at appropriate times. However, all devices must be handed in to a designated member of staff each evening for safekeeping and will be returned the following morning. This is designed to support student engagement, promote positive social interaction, and ensure the safeguarding, safety and wellbeing of all students.

School led off-site visits

School-led off-site visits are also an extension of the school's learning environment, and as such, all existing behaviour expectations and policies continue to apply throughout the duration of the trip. Unless specific requirements are made in the pre-visit information to support the visit, students are expected to have their electronic devices including mobile phones turned off and, in their rucksack, for the duration of the trip unless indicated otherwise in advance of the visit.

Searching electronic devices

Headteachers and staff they authorise have a statutory power to search a student or their possessions where they have reasonable grounds to suspect that the student may have a prohibited item or any other item that the school rules identify as an item which may be searched for.

The list of prohibited items is:

- knives and weapons;
- alcohol;
- illegal drugs;
- stolen items;
- any article that the member of staff reasonably suspects has been or is likely to be used: to commit an offence or to cause personal injury to, or damage to property of any person (including the student).

Electronic devices, including **mobile phones**, **smart watches** and **smart glasses**, can generate or contain files or data which relate to an offence, or which may cause harm to another person. This includes, but is not limited to, indecent images of children, pornography, abusive messages, images or videos, or evidence relating to suspected criminal behaviour.

As with all prohibited items, staff should first consider the appropriate safeguarding response if they find images, data or files on an electronic device that they reasonably suspect are likely to put a person at risk. Staff may examine any data or files on an electronic device they have confiscated as a result of a search, as defined below, if there is good reason to do so. An authorised staff member carrying out a search can confiscate any item that they have reasonable grounds for suspecting:

- poses a risk to staff or students;
- is prohibited, or identified in the school rules for which a search can be made or
- is evidence in relation to an offence.

If the member of staff conducting the search suspects they may find an indecent image of a child (sometimes known as nude or semi-nude images), the member of staff should never intentionally view the image, and must never copy, print, share, store or save such images. When an incident might involve an indecent image of a child and/or video, the member of staff should confiscate the device, avoid looking at the device and refer the incident to the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) as the most appropriate person to co-ordinate the school's response. If a member of staff finds any image, data or file that they suspect might constitute a specified offence, then they must be delivered to the Police as soon as is reasonably practicable. In exceptional circumstances members of staff may

dispose of the image or data if there is a good reason to do so. In determining a 'good reason' to examine or erase the data or files, the member of staff must have regard to the following guidance issued by the Secretary of State below.

In determining whether there is a 'good reason' to examine the data or files, the member of staff should reasonably suspect that the data or file on the device has been, or could be used, to cause harm, undermine the safe environment of the school and disrupt teaching, or be used to commit an offence. In determining whether there is a 'good reason' to erase any data or files from the device, the member of staff should consider whether the material found may constitute evidence relating to a suspected offence. In those instances, the data or files should not be deleted, and the device must be handed to the police as soon as it is reasonably practicable.

If the data or files are not suspected to be evidence in relation to an offence, a member of staff may delete the data or files if the continued existence of the data or file is likely to continue to cause harm to any person and the student and/or the parent refuses to delete the data or files themselves.

Online Behaviour Incidents

The way in which students relate to one another online can have a significant impact on the culture of the school. Plymstock School believes the same standards of behaviour should occur online and everyone should be treated with kindness, respect and dignity, and this is underpinned by KCSIE and the school's Online Safety policy (WeST). The school will likely apply a consequence to students when their behaviour online poses a threat or causes harm to another student, and/or could have repercussions for the orderly running of the school, when the student is identifiable as a member of the school or if the behaviour could adversely affect the reputation of the school and school community.

Confiscation as a disciplinary penalty

Schools' general power to discipline enables a member of staff to confiscate, retain or dispose of a student's property as a disciplinary penalty, where reasonable to do so. The law protects members of staff from liability in any proceedings brought against them for any loss of, or damage to, any item they have confiscated, provided they acted lawfully.

Further information

- Searching, screening and confiscation advice for Schools, July 2022