



Mobile Phones and Smart Technology Policy

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Contents

1. Purpose and principles
2. Statutory context
3. Scope and definitions
4. ReFocus mobile phone-free expectation
5. Responsibilities
6. Exceptions and reasonable adjustments
7. Breaches, sanctions, confiscation and searching
8. Safeguarding and online safety
9. Emergency and essential communication
10. Trips and activities outside the normal school day
11. Monitoring and review
12. Links with other policies and procedures

1. Purpose and principles

ReFocus is committed to providing a calm, safe and purposeful environment in which pupils can learn, build positive relationships and engage fully in school life. The school recognises that mobile phones and other smart technology can be useful outside school, but unrestricted access during the school day can create distraction, disruption and safeguarding and wellbeing risks.

ReFocus therefore operates as a mobile phone-free environment by default during the school day. The purpose of this policy is to set out the school's expectations and principles. The detailed arrangements used to implement the policy are operational procedures and may be changed by the school without requiring this policy to be rewritten.

Key principle: Pupils should not have access to or use mobile phones or other personal smart communication devices during the school day, except where an authorised exception has been agreed.

The school's approach is intended to:

- reduce distraction and support pupils to engage in learning;
- promote positive face-to-face interaction and participation in school life;
- reduce opportunities for bullying, harassment, inappropriate recording and harmful online activity during the school day;
- support a consistent and predictable school environment;
- protect pupils and staff from avoidable safeguarding and privacy risks; and
- ensure that reasonable adjustments and genuinely exceptional individual needs can be met appropriately.

2. Statutory context

This policy has been developed with regard to the Department for Education's statutory guidance Mobile phones in schools, which applies to independent schools and should be followed from 1 September 2026. The guidance states that schools should be mobile phone-free environments by default and that pupils should not have access to mobile phones throughout the school day, including lessons, movement between lessons, breaktimes and lunchtime.

This policy should be read alongside Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026, the Behaviour Policy and current Department for Education guidance on searching, screening and confiscation. ReFocus will also comply with its

duties under the Equality Act 2010, including the duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils where required.

The Department for Education recognises that schools may achieve a mobile phone-free environment in different ways. ReFocus will therefore determine the practical arrangements that best meet the needs of its pupils, sites and school community.

3. Scope and definitions

3.1 Who this policy applies to

This policy applies to all pupils attending ReFocus during the school day and to school-arranged activities where the school has specified that the same or adapted expectations apply.

3.2 Devices covered

For the purposes of this policy, “mobile phones and smart technology” includes personal devices with communication, messaging, internet, notification, audio-recording or video-recording functionality where the school has determined that they fall within this policy. This may include:

- mobile and smart phones;
- smartwatches and similar wearable communication devices;
- personal devices capable of sending or receiving messages or notifications;
- personal devices capable of taking photographs, video or audio recordings; and
- other emerging communication or smart technology with similar functionality.

School-owned devices, and personal laptops or tablets that have been specifically authorised for educational use, are governed by the Online Safety and Acceptable Use arrangements. A mobile phone is not treated as a Bring Your Own Device for learning purposes.

3.3 The school day

The expectation applies throughout the period in which a pupil is attending ReFocus during the normal school day, including lessons, supervised learning, movement between activities, breaktimes and lunchtime. Site-specific arrangements may be communicated separately.

4. ReFocus mobile phone-free expectation

Pupils should not have access to or use a mobile phone or other device covered by this policy during the school day unless an authorised exception applies.

ReFocus may use a range of arrangements to secure this expectation. Depending on the site, cohort or operational need, these may include arrangements for devices to be stored, handed in, secured or otherwise made inaccessible during the school day. The precise procedure will be communicated to pupils, parents/carers and staff.

Whatever operational arrangement is in place, pupils are expected to:

- follow the school’s instructions for the storage or security of devices;
- not use, access or attempt to access a device during the school day unless authorised;
- not use another pupil’s device or assist another pupil to circumvent the school’s arrangements;
- not photograph, film or audio-record pupils, staff or visitors without explicit school authorisation;
- not use a device to access, create, share or distribute harmful, abusive, discriminatory or inappropriate material; and
- hand over a device when lawfully required to do so in accordance with school procedures.

The fact that a device may be needed for travel to and from school does not give a pupil permission to access it during the school day.

5. Responsibilities

5.1 Pupils

Pupils are responsible for understanding and following the expectations in this policy and any operational arrangements communicated by the school. Expectations and the consequences of breaching them will be explained to pupils and reinforced as appropriate.

5.2 Staff

Staff will apply the policy consistently and proportionately and will follow the agreed school procedure for responding to breaches. Staff should model the school's expectations and should not use personal mobile phones for personal reasons in front of pupils during the school day, except where there is a legitimate professional, operational or emergency reason.

Where a staff member needs to use a mobile phone or similar device for an authorised work purpose, this should be done professionally and with regard to safeguarding, confidentiality and the Staff Code of Conduct.

5.3 Parents and carers

Parents/carers are asked to support the school's mobile phone-free approach and to reinforce the expectations with their child. Parents/carers should not expect pupils to read or respond to calls or messages during the school day.

Where a parent/carer needs to contact a pupil urgently, they should contact the school through the usual school communication route. The school will facilitate appropriate communication where necessary.

5.4 School leaders and the proprietor

School leaders will ensure that the policy is communicated clearly, implemented consistently and reviewed in light of statutory guidance, safeguarding considerations and the needs of the school community. The proprietor will maintain oversight of the school's compliance with relevant statutory requirements.

6. Exceptions and reasonable adjustments

ReFocus recognises that a mobile phone-free policy must operate alongside the school's legal duties and its responsibility to safeguard and support individual pupils. Anything other than the normal mobile phone-free expectation will be by exception only.

An exception or adaptation may be considered where necessary because of:

- a disability or special educational need where access to a device is required as a reasonable adjustment;
- a medical condition, including the use of health technology or an application linked to monitoring or treatment;
- an agreed safeguarding, welfare or communication need;
- exceptional family or caring circumstances, including where a pupil has responsibilities as a young carer; or
- an authorised educational or school purpose.

Any exception will be considered on its individual merits. Where appropriate, the school may limit access to a specific purpose, time, location or arrangement rather than providing unrestricted access. Agreed exceptions should be recorded in a way that enables relevant staff to understand and apply them consistently.

The existence of an exception does not remove the expectation that the device is used safely, appropriately and only for the agreed purpose.

7. Breaches, sanctions, confiscation and searching

Breaches of this policy will be managed in line with the school's Behaviour Policy and current school procedures. The response will be proportionate and may take account of the nature of the breach, any repetition, the pupil's individual circumstances and any safeguarding or SEND considerations.

Sanctions may include confiscation of a mobile phone or other smart device. The length of any confiscation and the arrangements for return will be determined by the school in accordance with current guidance and the school's procedures. These arrangements may include return to the pupil or to a parent/carer, depending on the circumstances and the procedure in operation.

Mobile phones and similar devices may be identified within school rules as items that can be searched for. Where a search is considered necessary, it will only be carried out by the headteacher or an authorised member of staff, where lawful and proportionate, and in accordance with the Behaviour Policy and current Department for Education guidance on searching, screening and confiscation.

Where a breach gives rise to a concern that a pupil is suffering, or may be at risk of, harm, the safeguarding response will take priority over the disciplinary response.

8. Safeguarding and online safety

ReFocus recognises that mobile phones and smart technology can feature in safeguarding concerns, including bullying, harassment, exploitation, harmful sexual behaviour, sharing of nude or semi-nude images, AI-generated sexual imagery, threats, coercion, inappropriate recording and the sharing of harmful content.

Any concern involving a device that may constitute a safeguarding issue must be reported and managed in accordance with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and the Online Safety and Acceptable Use Policy. Staff should preserve evidence appropriately and should not routinely view, copy or circulate sexual imagery or other harmful content.

Where a pupil needs to show staff information on a device in order to report an online safety or safeguarding concern, staff will support this in a way that protects the pupil, preserves relevant evidence and follows safeguarding procedures.

Photographing, filming or audio-recording another person without permission is not permitted and may result in both a behaviour and safeguarding response, depending on the circumstances.

9. Emergency and essential communication

ReFocus recognises that parents/carers may need to contact pupils during the school day and that pupils may occasionally need to contact home. Such communication should normally take place through the school rather than through a pupil's personal mobile phone.

Where there is an emergency or another legitimate need for direct communication, staff will facilitate this in an appropriate way. The school's operational arrangements will ensure that a mobile phone-free environment does not prevent necessary communication or access to support.

10. Trips and activities outside the normal school day

The school may set different or additional arrangements for educational visits, residential activities, work-related learning, off-site provision or activities outside the normal school day. These arrangements will be determined according to the nature of the activity, safeguarding considerations and the needs of the pupils involved.

Where mobile phones are permitted on a trip or activity, their use may still be restricted by time, place or purpose and pupils will remain subject to the school's safeguarding, behaviour and online safety expectations.

11. Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner if there are changes to legislation or statutory guidance, a significant change to school arrangements, or safeguarding or operational learning indicates that revision is required.

The practical procedure used to implement the policy may be reviewed or changed more frequently. Such operational changes do not require the policy itself to be reapproved unless they alter the principles or expectations set out within it.

The school will monitor the implementation of the policy through its normal behaviour, safeguarding and leadership processes. ReFocus will take account of pupil, parent/carers and staff experience where this is useful in evaluating the effectiveness of its arrangements.

12. Links with other policies and procedures

This policy should be read alongside relevant ReFocus policies and procedures, including:

- Behaviour Policy;
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy;
- Online Safety and Acceptable Use Policy;
- Staff Code of Conduct;
- SEND Policy;
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy;
- Equality and Diversity Policy;
- Searching, screening and confiscation arrangements; and
- Educational Visits / Off-site Activities arrangements, where applicable.

Policy and procedure: This document sets the school's policy position. The method used to secure devices, arrangements for handing in or storage, and the detailed response to individual breaches are operational procedures and may be communicated separately.