



Smartphones & Wearable Tech
Policy

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J. Lawrence, Chair of Governors

Introduction

Every school has a duty to create an environment that is calm, safe and free from distraction so all pupils, whatever their background, can learn and thrive. One of the greatest challenges facing schools is the presence of mobile phones. Today, by the age of 12, 97% of pupils own a mobile phone.¹ Mobile phones risk unnecessary distraction, disruption and diversion. One in three secondary school pupils report that mobile phones are used in most lessons without permission.² This not only distracts the single pupil using the phone, but disrupts the lesson for a whole class, and diverts teachers' efforts away from learning. We owe it to our children to do what we can to remove distractions and enable them to be fully present and engaged in the classroom. We also owe it to our pupils to keep them safe at school. One in five pupils have experienced bullying online.³ By removing mobile phones from the school day, we can create a safe space where pupils are protected from the risks and dangers associated with social media and cyber-bullying, as well as the peer pressure and possible stigma associated with owning what are often expensive devices.

(ref: DfE Mobile phones in schools Guidance for schools on prohibiting the use of mobile phones throughout the school day February 2024)

Smartphones at Little Melton Primary School

At Little Melton we operate a policy of 'mobile phone handed in on arrival.'

We accept that children, particularly those older children who walk to school on their own may usefully require access to their mobile phones before and after school, but do not require access to their mobile phones throughout the school day.

On entry to the school each pupil discreetly hands in their device to their teacher or the Headteacher on the playground and these are then collected at the end of the school day. During the day the devices will be stored in a safe and secure location in the school. All phones or items covered by this policy are brought in at the owner's risk.

In these rare cases where children require a mobile phone because they walk to/from school unaccompanied we would like parents to make the school aware that their child has brought the device to school. If a device is found without the school being aware then parents will be contacted on the same day and the phone collected and stored in a safe location as described above.

We also recognise that there is a growing range of wearable tech. In these cases if the device has the capacity in school to take photos, record video or send messages we also operate the above policy ie handed to teacher on arrival. If parents are unsure then they should speak to a member of school staff.

The role of pupils

All pupils will be made clear on the school's policy on prohibiting the use of mobile phones and will be reminded of the policy, and the consequences and sanctions for not following it, at the start of each school year and again, where appropriate, at regular intervals. Pupils at Little Melton will be taught the risks that are associated with the use of mobile phones, both in school and more broadly, to ensure they understand the decision being taken by their school to prohibit the use of mobile phones

throughout the school day. These risks can include a loss of focus in lessons, classroom disruption and an increase in bullying. (see online safety curriculum)

Pupils will also be taught the benefits of having a mobile phone-free environment and be encouraged to see such an environment as desirable and valuable. This will help to create intrinsic motivation to support the school culture.

The role of parents

Parents have an important role in supporting the school's policy on prohibiting the use of mobile phones and are encouraged to reinforce and discuss the policy at home as appropriate, including the risks associated with mobile phone use and the benefits of a mobile phone-free environment.

Where parents need to contact their child during the school day, they should be directed to the school office, where staff are aware of the school's policy on relaying messages and facilitating contact.

Where parents have questions or concerns, staff will address these in a timely manner and clearly communicate the reasons for prohibiting the use of mobile phones.

For up to date information for parents on the best advice for how to manage their children's use of smartphones, we have curated some resources on our school online safety page at:

<http://www.littlemeltonprimaryschool.co.uk/internet-safety-information-for-parents/>

This page is regularly reviewed and updated. We also include teaching about online safety with mobile devices as part of our online safety curriculum (also available on the school website).

The use of sanctions

The Department for Education (DfE) provides guidance on how schools can use sanctions lawfully in the behaviour in schools guidance. Schools can use a range of sanctions for breaching the mobile phone policy appropriate to their context, including confiscation and detentions. Schools have the power to confiscate mobile phones or similar devices as a disciplinary penalty. The law protects staff from liability in any proceedings brought against them for any loss or damage to items they have confiscated as a sanction, providing they have acted lawfully. Staff should consider whether the confiscation is proportionate and consider any special circumstances relevant to the case. Headteachers are backed by the DfE to confiscate mobile phones and similar devices for the length of time they deem proportionate. (*Ref: Mobile phones in schools Guidance for schools on prohibiting the use of mobile phones throughout the school day February 2024*)

In considering whether a sanction is reasonable, the school will consider whether it is proportionate in the circumstances of the case and consider any special circumstances relevant to its imposition including the pupil's age, any religious requirements affecting them and any special educational needs or disability (SEND) they may have (see section on responding to the behaviour of pupils with SEND in behaviour in Schools guidance).

School staff will also consider whether the misbehaviour gives cause to suspect that a pupil is suffering, or may be at risk of, harm. Where this may be the case, as set out in part 1 of keeping children safe in education, school staff should follow the school's

child protection policy and speak to the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy). They will consider if pastoral support, an early intervention or a referral to children's social care is appropriate. 9 Searching pupils

Headteachers, or staff they authorise, have a statutory power to search a pupil or their possessions where they have reasonable grounds to suspect that the pupil is in possession of a prohibited item as set out in legislation⁷ or any item identified in the school rules as an item that may be searched for.

Headteachers can and should identify mobile phones and similar devices as something that may be searched for in their school behaviour policy. Staff should refer to the searching, screening and confiscation in schools guidance regarding searching a pupil.

(Ref: Mobile phones in schools Guidance for schools on prohibiting the use of mobile phones throughout the school day February 2024)

Adaptations and reasonable adjustments

Whilst schools should prohibit the use of mobile phones throughout the school day to reduce distraction and disruption, they must comply with duties such as the duty to make reasonable adjustments where necessary. There may be other exceptional circumstances where schools should consider making adaptations to their policy for specific pupils. Schools should assess each case on its own merits. Schools have a duty under the Equality Act 2010 to take such steps as is reasonable to avoid substantial disadvantage to a disabled pupil caused by the school's policies or practices. Allowing a disabled pupil access to their mobile phone during the school day, where it is necessary due to the nature of their disability, may be considered a reasonable adjustment and a failure to do so may be a breach of the school's duty.

Maintained schools and academies have a duty under the Children and Families Act 2014 to have arrangements in place to support pupils with medical conditions. In meeting this duty the governing body, proprietor or management committee must have regard to the statutory guidance supporting pupils with medical conditions at school. In some circumstances, supporting a pupil with their medical condition can involve the use of a mobile phone. For example, pupils with diabetes might use continuous glucose monitoring with a sensor linked to their mobile phone to monitor blood sugar levels. Where mobile phone use allows pupils to manage their medical condition effectively, it would not be reasonable for a school to prevent this.

Beyond these specific duties, schools should recognise that a need for mobile phone access for some pupils may depend on their individual circumstances, including at home.

Allowing flexibility for individual pupils does not mean that these pupils should be exempt from all restrictions on the use of their mobile phone. Schools should develop practices which enable pupils to use their mobile phone for a specific purpose at specific times and locations, for example in Headteacher's office.

(Ref: Mobile phones in schools Guidance for schools on prohibiting the use of mobile phones throughout the school day February 2024)