



## MOBILE PHONE POLICY

**Warlingham is a mobile phone-free school by default. No parent or student may create their own exemption. Any exception must be authorised in writing by the school through the published application process.**

### Purpose and statutory status

This policy protects learning, wellbeing, safeguarding and belonging by prohibiting pupil access to mobile phones and comparable smart technology throughout the school day. It has regard to the Department for Education's statutory Mobile phones in schools guidance, updated 29 June 2026 and to be followed from 1 September 2026, together with Behaviour in Schools, Keeping Children Safe in Education, equality law and the statutory guidance on supporting pupils with medical conditions.

It should be read alongside the Behaviour Policy, Anti-bullying Policy, Keeping Children Safe in Education Policy, Online Safety Policy, SEND Policy and Medical Policy.

**Commented [JF1]:** Currently called 'Anti-Bullying Policy' on website - is a new policy in development? Titles need to align for ease of reference/accuracy.

### Definitions

| Term                   | Meaning                                                                                                                                                                  |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Smartphone             | A mobile device with advanced computing functions such as internet access, third-party apps, camera, location services, social media or internet messaging.              |
| Basic phone            | A device limited to ordinary calls and SMS text messages, without internet browsing, apps or comparable smart functions.                                                 |
| Smart technology       | A smartwatch, wearable or other personal device capable of sending or receiving messages or notifications, accessing networks, or recording audio, photographs or video. |
| Authorised arrangement | A written, time-limited school decision permitting a defined departure from the ordinary rule for a specific purpose and subject to stated controls.                     |
| School day             | The period from entering school grounds until leaving after the student's final school commitment, including movement time, break and lunchtime.                         |

### Core expectations

- Mobile phones, smartwatches and comparable smart technology must not be used, seen or heard during the school day unless a written individual arrangement expressly permits specified access.
- A basic phone brought for ordinary travel communication must be switched off and stored in the student's bag throughout the school day.
- Photography, filming, audio recording and use of a device in a toilet or changing room are prohibited unless specifically authorised for a lawful school purpose.
- Students must comply immediately with lawful instructions to hand in or surrender a device.
- Parents must contact Reception or Student Services when they need a message passed to a student; they must not contact the student's personal phone during the school day.

### Year-group arrangements

| Cohort in 2026–27 | Ordinary arrangement                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Years 7 and 8     | Smartphones must not be brought to school. A basic phone may be brought for ordinary travel communication but must remain switched off and stored in the student's bag. Any smartphone exception requires prior written school authorisation. |
| Years 9 to 11     | A smartphone brought to school must be handed in during morning tutor time and stored in the designated secure system. Late arrivals hand it to Student Services on signing in. It is returned at the published end-of-day collection point.  |
| Sixth Form        | Use is restricted to the sixth-form area and must not occur in front of younger pupils. Classroom use requires the teacher's permission for a defined learning purpose. Misuse remains subject to this policy and the Behaviour Policy.       |

The smartphone prohibition will extend annually to each new Year 7 cohort. Detailed hand-in, collection and storage arrangements may be updated operationally provided they remain consistent with this policy.

### Individual exceptions and reasonable adjustments

The school will comply with its duties to make reasonable adjustments, support pupils with medical conditions and safeguard children. It may also authorise another exceptional individual arrangement where this is necessary and proportionate. Flexibility for one student does not create a general exemption and will be limited to the specific purpose, times and locations approved.

Examples include a smartphone needed to monitor a medical condition; access necessary for a defined young-carer or safeguarding responsibility; or a specific and materially increased safeguarding risk that cannot reasonably be managed through a basic phone or another arrangement.

### Exceptional safeguarding authorisation for Years 7 and 8

The ordinary risks and practicalities of travelling to and from school—including public transport, travelling alone, changes of route, delays, parental work commitments and routine clubs or activities—do not justify an exception.

In rare cases, the school may authorise a student to bring a smartphone where particular circumstances create a specific and materially increased safeguarding risk that cannot reasonably be managed through a basic phone or another arrangement. This may include exceptional, complex and regular independent travel through unfamiliar or higher-risk locations, particularly at unusual times, where a defined smartphone function is judged necessary to manage the identified risk. The decision is based on the safeguarding risk, not travel convenience, parental preference or participation in an activity.

### Application and school decision

Parents must apply in advance using the Exceptional Smartphone Authorisation Application Form, available upon request from the school. Parents must not decide independently that their child is exempt or send a smartphone into school on the basis that they consider it necessary. Submitting an application does not create an exemption; the ordinary policy remains in force unless and until the school issues written authorisation.

The application must identify the specific medical, caring, safeguarding or exceptional need; explain why a basic phone or another reasonable arrangement is insufficient; identify the smartphone function required; and provide relevant supporting information. An authorised senior leader will decide the application, with advice from the DSL, SENDCo, medical or pastoral professionals where appropriate.

Written approval will state whether the device may only be brought to school or may also be accessed during the school day; hand-in and collection requirements; any permitted purpose, time and location; the responsible staff member; and the duration, review date and expiry date. Permission to bring a smartphone does not itself permit access during the school day. Unless written approval says otherwise, the device must be handed in immediately on arrival and collected when the student leaves.

An urgent interim arrangement may be made by the school where waiting for the full application would itself create a safeguarding or medical risk. It must be recorded and reviewed promptly. An expired, varied or withdrawn authorisation provides no continuing exemption.

### Confiscation and consequences

A breach is recorded under the published Choices and Consequences tariff, ordinarily as an Electronic Device Infringement. Confiscation is a disciplinary penalty and will be used lawfully and proportionately, taking account of the intended outcome, recurrence, age, SEND, safeguarding and other individual circumstances.

| Device/breach                                                           | Normal response                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Basic phone seen, heard or used                                         | First occasion: confiscation until the end of the school day. Persistent breach: parent collection and further behaviour consequence.                                                                          |
| Unauthorised smartphone                                                 | First occasion: confiscation for five school days. A subsequent occasion may result in confiscation for up to one calendar month, determined proportionately and stated in writing.                            |
| Smartwatch or comparable smart device                                   | Managed as a smartphone unless its functions and circumstances justify a different proportionate response.                                                                                                     |
| Refusal to surrender or hand in                                         | A separate failure to follow a reasonable instruction, escalated under the Behaviour Policy; the device breach and refusal are recorded accurately.                                                            |
| Harmful, intimidating, discriminatory, sexual, coercive or criminal use | Immediate safeguarding response and proportionate behaviour action. Serious or persistent misuse may be referred to the Headteacher for individual consideration of suspension; suspension is never automatic. |

The confiscation notice will identify the device, reason, duration, storage and return arrangements. A parent may provide a basic phone for necessary ordinary travel communication during a smartphone confiscation. The school may also make a basic phone available where practicable.

### Early release for medical, caring or safeguarding reasons

A parent seeking return before the stated end of a confiscation must complete the Early Release from Confiscation on Safeguarding or Medical Grounds Form. Parents must not instruct their child to retain, recover or refuse to surrender the device. Submission does not require the school to release it.

An authorised senior leader will decide whether continued retention would create or materially increase a specific medical, caring or safeguarding risk that cannot reasonably be managed through a basic phone or another arrangement. Ordinary travel, inconvenience, parental preference, routine clubs or activities, and the wish to use tracking or messaging functions will not normally meet this threshold.

The decision may be informed by the DSL, SENDCo, medical or pastoral professionals. If early return is authorised, the school may require daily hand-in, restrict access to an agreed function, time or location, substitute another proportionate consequence or impose another necessary control. Early return changes the practical operation of the confiscation; it does not invalidate the original consequence. The decision, rationale, conditions and review date will be recorded.

### **Storage, early departure and responsibility**

Devices handed in or confiscated will be identified, recorded and stored securely, with access limited to authorised staff. A student leaving early because of an appointment, illness or another authorised reason may collect a normally stored device when signing out. This is distinct from early release of a device being held as a disciplinary confiscation, which requires the procedure in section 6.1.

Personal devices are brought onto the site at the owner's risk. The school does not accept responsibility for ordinary loss, theft or damage except where responsibility arises from a failure to exercise reasonable care or otherwise under law. Staff acting lawfully in confiscating an item are protected from liability as provided by legislation.

### **Searching, examination and safeguarding evidence**

Mobile phones, smartwatches and comparable communication or recording devices are items which authorised staff may search for where there are reasonable grounds to suspect a breach of school rules. Searches, confiscation, examination of data and deletion will be undertaken only through lawful powers and in accordance with the Behaviour Policy, with attention to necessity, proportionality, privacy, dignity, SEND and safeguarding.

A routine confiscation does not by itself authorise staff to browse a device. Where a device or its contents may contain evidence of harm, abuse, a crime or a safeguarding concern, staff will preserve evidence, avoid unnecessary viewing or sharing, and refer promptly to the DSL and, where appropriate, the police. Parental consent will be sought where appropriate but is not required where doing so would place a child at risk, compromise evidence or be inconsistent with the school's safeguarding duties.

A student wishing to report harmful online content must be enabled to do so safely. The school will use its published safeguarding-evidence process to record or transfer necessary information securely and minimise further circulation.

### **Examinations and assessments**

Mobile phones, smartwatches, headphones and other unauthorised electronic or communication devices must not be in a student's possession during a formal examination or assessment. Examination-board rules apply and a breach may lead to removal, reporting to the awarding body or disqualification. The school's Exam Conditions Breach procedure applies independently of this policy.

### **Trips and activities outside the normal day**

The school will specify the phone arrangements for each trip, residential visit or activity outside the normal school day. Use may be prohibited or restricted to protect education, safeguarding and group supervision. A student requiring contact must follow the trip leader's instructions. Any individual medical or safeguarding arrangement will be considered in the trip risk assessment.

### **Education about responsible use**

A phone-free day is accompanied by explicit education about online safety, privacy, recording, consent, cyberbullying, harmful content, sharing nudes or semi-nudes, exploitation, location information, healthy attention and responsible conduct outside school. The school will remind students of the policy and consequences at induction, at the start of each year and at appropriate intervals.

**Staff use**

Staff, volunteers, contractors and supply staff must model the policy. Personal phones must not be used for personal reasons in front of pupils. Use is restricted to non-contact time and areas where pupils are not present, except for an authorised work or emergency purpose such as multi-factor authentication, issuing school information through an approved system or responding to an immediate incident.

- Personal devices must not be used to process confidential school information or pupil personal data, or to enter such information into unapproved applications or generative-AI services.
- Staff must not give personal contact details to pupils or parents or connect with them through personal social-media or messaging accounts.
- Photographs, video or audio of pupils must be made only on authorised school equipment or through an expressly approved school system.
- School-issued phones must be used only by authorised staff for professional purposes in accordance with the Staff Code of Conduct and data-protection requirements.

**Parents, visitors and volunteers**

Parents, visitors, governors, contractors and volunteers must not photograph or record pupils other than their own child at an authorised public event, and must not publish images containing other children without appropriate consent. They must not use phones while working with pupils. Trip volunteers must not contact other parents or impose sanctions themselves and must refer concerns to school staff.

Reception is the first point of contact during the school day. Parents must support hand-in, confiscation and collection arrangements and use the published forms when seeking an exceptional authorisation or early release. They must not tell a student that an exception applies before written school approval is issued.

**Recording, monitoring and governance**

The school records confiscations, refusals, harmful-device incidents, exceptional arrangements, early-release decisions and complaints on the appropriate authorised systems. Behaviour information is recorded on Arbor; safeguarding concerns are recorded on CPOMS in accordance with the Keeping Children Safe in Education Policy, with dual recording where required.

Leaders and governors monitor implementation, consistency, repeated breaches, confiscation duration, searches, authorised exceptions, safeguarding outcomes, equality and disproportionality. Authorisations are reviewed and expired promptly. The policy is reviewed annually and sooner where legislation, statutory guidance, safeguarding learning or operational evidence requires it.

**Roles and responsibilities**

| Role                                         | Core responsibility                                                                                                   |
|----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Headteacher                                  | Owens the phone-free culture, ensures lawful implementation and authorises delegated decision-makers.                 |
| DSL / safeguarding leadership                | Advises on safeguarding, young-carer and welfare risks; oversees evidence and early-release decisions where relevant. |
| SENDCo / medical leadership                  | Advises on reasonable adjustments, SEND, disability, medical plans and accessible implementation.                     |
| Deputy Headteacher – Behaviour and Attitudes | Aligns this policy with the Behaviour Policy, tariff, storage, recording, staff training and quality assurance.       |

| Role                               | Core responsibility                                                                                                   |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Heads of Year / authorised leaders | Manage applications, communication, confiscation, review and compliance with authorised arrangements.                 |
| All staff                          | Model and enforce the policy consistently, safeguard, record accurately and follow search/confiscation procedures.    |
| Parents and students               | Follow the published arrangements; apply rather than self-authorise; comply with written conditions and consequences. |

#### Related Policies & documents

- Exceptional Circumstances Smartphone Authorisation Application;
- Early Release from Confiscation on Safeguarding or Medical Grounds Application;
- Behaviour Policy;
- Keeping Children Safe in Education;
- Anti-Bullying Policy;
- Online Safety;
- SEND Policy;
- Examinations Policy and Exam Conditions Breach procedure;

|                                  |             |
|----------------------------------|-------------|
| Approved by Local Governing Body | Autumn 2026 |
| Due for review                   | Autumn 2027 |
| SLT Member                       | Mr R Toop   |