HEDNESFORD HILLS FEDERATION

USE OF MOBILE PHONES AND SMART TECHNOLOGY POLICY

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Policy owner	Headteacher / Designated Safeguarding Lead
Approved by	Governing Body
Date approved	7.20.26
Review date	September 2027
Review cycle	Annual, or sooner if legislation or statutory guidance changes

1. Purpose and scope

This policy sets out Hednesford Hill Federations approach to mobile phones and smart technology. It supports a safe, respectful and focused learning environment and reflects West Hill school's values of Respect, Learn and Achieve.

The policy aims to:

- protect pupils' welfare and support effective safeguarding;
- provide a mobile phone-free school day for pupils, subject to agreed exceptions and reasonable adjustments;
- reduce distraction, disruption, cyberbullying, unauthorised recording and access to inappropriate content;
- support professional boundaries for staff and volunteers;
- protect personal information, images and recordings; and
- provide clear expectations for pupils, staff, parents, carers, visitors and contractors.

It applies to pupils, including children in Nursery, Pre-School and Reception, staff, supply staff, students, volunteers, governors, visitors and contractors while on school premises or taking part in school-organised activities, including educational visits.

For the purposes of this policy, smart technology includes mobile and smart phones, smart watches, tablets and other personal devices capable of messaging, connecting to the internet, taking photographs, making audio or video recordings, livestreaming or communicating with other devices.

2. Legal and statutory context

This policy has regard to current legislation and Department for Education guidance, including:

- the Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 and the Department for Education statutory guidance Mobile phones in schools, which schools should follow from 1 September 2026;
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 (KCSIE 2026);
- Behaviour in Schools guidance;
- Searching, Screening and Confiscation guidance;
- the Equality Act 2010, including the duty to make reasonable adjustments;
- the Data Protection Act 2018, UK GDPR and other applicable data protection legislation; and
- UK Council for Internet Safety guidance on sharing nudes and semi-nudes.

This policy should be read alongside the school's Behaviour Policy, Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, Online Safety Policy, Staff Code of Conduct, Acceptable Use arrangements, Data Protection Policy, Medical Needs Policy and Educational Visits procedures.

3. Our approach: a mobile phone-free school day

All settings within the Hednesford Hill Federation are mobile phone-free environment for pupils during the school day. Pupils must not use or have access to mobile phones or personal smart technology during lessons, transitions, breaktimes, lunchtimes, assemblies, clubs taking place as part of the school day, or other supervised school activities, unless an agreed exception applies.

Pupils may bring a mobile phone to school where there is a clear reason, for example where an older pupil travels to or from school independently. The device must be switched off and handed to the school office before entering school. It will be stored securely and collected after the pupil leaves at the end of the day. The pupil will not have access to the device during the school day.

Smart watches or other wearable devices with messaging, calling, camera, recording or internet functionality must not be used by pupils during the school day.

Children in Early Years must not bring or use personal mobile phones or smart devices unless an individual arrangement has been agreed for a medical, disability or other exceptional need.

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1 Headteacher

- has overall responsibility for implementation, communication and review of this policy;
- ensures the policy is consistent with the Behaviour Policy and safeguarding arrangements;
- identifies staff who are authorised to conduct searches in accordance with statutory guidance;
- ensures reasonable adjustments and exceptional arrangements are documented and communicated to relevant staff; and
- ensures staff understand professional boundaries concerning personal devices.

4.2 Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and deputies

- consider the safeguarding implications of device-related incidents;
- lead the safeguarding response to concerns involving online abuse, exploitation, grooming, cyberbullying, child-on-child abuse and sharing nudes or semi-nudes;
- ensure relevant concerns and actions are recorded on MyConcern;
- liaise with Children's Social Care, Police or other agencies where required; and
- ensure responses involving imagery or electronic evidence follow current statutory and UKCIS guidance.

4.3 Staff, volunteers and students

- model appropriate use of technology and enforce the policy consistently;
- report safeguarding concerns immediately to the DSL or a deputy;
- use school-approved systems for school communications;
- not photograph, video or record pupils using personal devices; and
- follow the Staff Code of Conduct, Online Safety Policy and safeguarding procedures.

4.4 Governing Body

The Governing Body will assure itself that this policy is implemented effectively and is consistent with statutory safeguarding, behaviour, equality and online-safety requirements. Assurance will include appropriate Headteacher/DSL reporting, review of anonymised incident themes, oversight of filtering and monitoring arrangements and safeguarding governor visits.

The designated Safeguarding Governor will discuss relevant aspects of mobile and smart technology, online safety, filtering and monitoring and associated safeguarding incidents during safeguarding visits, and will report appropriate findings and actions back to the Governing Body.

5. Expectations for pupils

- Pupils must not use mobile phones, smart watches with communication functionality or similar personal smart devices during the school day.
- Where permission has been given for a phone to be brought to school, it must be switched off and handed to the school office on arrival.
- Pupils must not use a personal device to photograph, video, audio-record or livestream another pupil, member of staff or visitor on school premises or during a school activity.
- Pupils must not use technology to bully, threaten, harass, coerce or embarrass another person, or to access or share inappropriate or harmful content.
- Pupils should report worrying or inappropriate online behaviour to a trusted adult.

The federation will teach pupils about safe, responsible and respectful use of technology through the curriculum, assemblies, PSHE/RSHE and online-safety education.

6. Expectations for staff and volunteers

Personal mobile phones should be kept secure, out of sight and on silent during teaching and whenever staff are supervising pupils. Personal devices should normally only be used in designated staff areas or away from pupils, except where there is a genuine operational or emergency need.

Staff must use school phones, school email and approved communication platforms for school business. Staff must not use personal telephone numbers, private social-media accounts or unapproved messaging services to communicate with pupils.

Staff, volunteers and students must not use personal devices to photograph, video or record pupils. School-owned and authorised devices must be used.

In a genuine emergency where use of a personal device is necessary to protect a child's welfare, the member of staff must inform the Headteacher or DSL as soon as possible and follow their instructions concerning secure handling, transfer and deletion of any information.

7. Parents, carers, visitors and contractors

- Parents and carers should contact pupils during the school day through the school office.
- Urgent messages will be passed to pupils through school systems.
- Parents and carers must follow school arrangements concerning photography and recording at school events.

- Visitors and contractors must follow school signage and staff instructions about personal-device use and must not photograph or record pupils unless specifically authorised.
- Where a visitor's work requires use of a device with photographic or recording capability, appropriate safeguards and supervision will be agreed.

8. Searching, confiscation and examination of devices

Mobile phones and similar personal smart devices are identified within the school's rules as items that may be searched for where the statutory requirements are met. Any search of a pupil or their possessions will only be undertaken by the Headteacher or an authorised member of staff and will be conducted in accordance with current DfE Searching, Screening and Confiscation guidance and the school's Behaviour Policy.

Staff will seek the pupil's co-operation wherever appropriate. Searches will be conducted with due regard to the pupil's dignity, age, SEND, communication needs and any other relevant individual circumstances.

A device may be confiscated where the school's rules have been breached. The length and arrangements for confiscation will be proportionate and will take account of the circumstances, including the pupil's age and SEND.

Staff will not routinely search the contents of a pupil's device. Where there are lawful grounds to examine data or files, authorised staff will follow current statutory guidance. Where material may constitute evidence of an offence or raises a safeguarding concern, the DSL will be informed and Police advice or involvement will be sought where appropriate.

Parents will be informed about searches and significant confiscation in accordance with statutory guidance and school procedures.

9. Safeguarding and child-on-child abuse

Misuse of mobile phones or smart technology may constitute or facilitate a safeguarding concern. This may include cyberbullying, sexual harassment, coercion, grooming, exploitation, threatening behaviour, harmful content, non-consensual recording or image sharing, or other forms of child-on-child abuse.

Such behaviour will not be dismissed as banter or an inevitable part of growing up. Staff will follow the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and report concerns promptly to the DSL or a deputy.

Where an incident has an online element, staff must take particular care to preserve children's welfare and avoid actions that could compromise evidence or increase the circulation of harmful material.

10. Sharing nudes and semi-nudes

Any incident involving the consensual or non-consensual sharing of nude or semi-nude images or videos of a child or young person will be treated as a safeguarding matter and referred immediately to the DSL or a deputy.

Staff must not intentionally view, copy, print, share, store, save or forward nude or semi-nude imagery of a child, and must not ask a child to download or forward such imagery. Wherever possible, the safeguarding response will be based on what the child or other person reports about the imagery.

Any exceptional decision to view imagery will be made by the DSL in accordance with current UKCIS guidance and the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, with the reason and actions appropriately recorded.

Where a device needs to be preserved for Police investigation, it will be handled and secured in accordance with safeguarding guidance and Police advice. Staff must not conduct their own investigation of illegal imagery.

11. Data protection, images and recordings

Personal devices must not be used to store school information or pupil images. School-owned devices and approved systems must be used for school records, photographs and communications.

The school will process personal information, photographs and recordings in accordance with data protection law, its privacy notices and Data Protection Policy. Image permissions and the lawful basis for use will be managed in accordance with school procedures.

A safeguarding need to share information will be considered separately from general consent arrangements. Staff should not allow concerns about data protection to prevent appropriate safeguarding information sharing.

12. Filtering and monitoring

The school will maintain appropriate filtering and monitoring arrangements for school networks and school-owned devices in accordance with KCSIE 2026 and current DfE filtering and monitoring standards.

The effectiveness of these arrangements will be reviewed through the school's safeguarding and online-safety governance processes. Staff will know how to report concerns about inappropriate content, filtering or monitoring.

13. Sanctions, incidents and recording

Breaches of this policy will be managed consistently and proportionately in accordance with the Behaviour Policy. Depending on the circumstances, this may include confiscation of a device, parental contact, a meeting with parents/carers or other proportionate school sanctions.

Repeated or significant device-related incidents will be recorded and monitored by school leaders. Safeguarding incidents will be recorded on MyConcern in accordance with the school's safeguarding procedures.

Where misuse may indicate that a child is suffering or at risk of harm, safeguarding action will take priority over disciplinary action. Any sanction will take account of the child's individual circumstances, including SEND and any relevant vulnerability.

14. Reasonable adjustments and exceptional circumstances

The school will make reasonable adjustments where necessary for pupils with disabilities, medical needs or SEND and may agree adaptations in other exceptional circumstances. An Education, Health and Care Plan is not required before a reasonable adjustment can be considered.

Examples may include a device required for medical monitoring or assistive technology. Any exception will be agreed by an appropriate senior leader, documented in the pupil's relevant individual plan where appropriate, co-produced with parents/carers and communicated to staff who need to know.

Alternative arrangements will be available so that pupils can contact parents or carers where necessary through the school office or an appropriate member of staff.

15. Educational visits and off-site activities

The federation's mobile phone-free expectations for pupils continue to apply during school-organised educational visits and off-site activities unless the trip leader and Headteacher have agreed a specific arrangement.

Staff are permitted to take their personal mobile phones on educational visits to support the safe and effective management of the trip. Personal phones may be used, where necessary, to communicate with school staff, the school office or other relevant contacts in connection with the visit. Wherever possible, staff should use their phones away from pupils and should ensure that their use does not interfere with the effective supervision of children.

Personal mobile phones must not be used to take photographs, videos or recordings of pupils. Any photographs or recordings required as part of the visit must be taken using a school-owned and authorised device in accordance with the school's safeguarding, online safety and data protection procedures.

Staff should use school-owned devices for school photography. Any exceptional use of a personal device in an emergency must follow section 6 of this policy.

16. Communication, education and implementation

The school will communicate its mobile phone arrangements clearly to pupils, parents/carers, staff and visitors. Significant changes will be communicated in advance and implemented consistently with the school's Behaviour Policy.

Staff will receive appropriate information or training on device-related safeguarding, professional boundaries, searching and confiscation, online safety, sharing nudes and semi-nudes, and data protection.

Pupils will receive age-appropriate education about online safety, respectful behaviour, privacy, healthy technology use and how to seek help.

17. Monitoring and review

SLT will monitor implementation and review patterns in significant or repeated incidents. The DSL will monitor safeguarding themes arising from technology-related concerns. Relevant anonymised themes and actions will be reported through the school's safeguarding and governance arrangements.

The policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner where legislation, KCSIE, DfE mobile-phone guidance, safeguarding guidance or local circumstances require amendment.

18. Related policies and documents

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy;

- Behaviour Policy;
- Online Safety Policy;
- Staff Code of Conduct;
- Acceptable Use Policy / Agreements;
- Anti-Bullying Policy, including cyberbullying;
- Data Protection Policy and Privacy Notices;
- Medical Needs Policy;
- SEND Policy and Information Report;
- Educational Visits Policy / procedures; and
- Complaints Policy.