



THE WEBBER
INDEPENDENT SCHOOL

Mobile Phones Policy for Pupils (Including Smart Technology and Devices with Similar Functionality) 2026/2027

This Policy applies to Webber Independent School,
including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage. (EYFS)

Last Review: August 2026

Next Review: July 2027

This policy is written to have regard to the Department for Education's statutory guidance "Mobile phones in schools" (updated 29 June 2026), which applies to independent schools as well as state-funded schools, and should be read alongside the school's Behaviour Policy, Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Anti-Bullying Policy, ICT and Online Safety/Acceptable Use Policy, Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education PolicySEND Policy.

Introduction and Purpose

The Webber Independent School is committed to providing a calm, safe and focused learning environment in which pupils can thrive academically, socially and emotionally. Mobile phones and similar smart technology, if unmanaged, can disrupt learning, contribute to bullying and online harm, and undermine pupils' wellbeing and attention.

This policy sets out the School's approach to mobile phones and devices with similar functionality (including smartwatches, tablets and any device capable of sending or receiving messages, calls or notifications, or recording audio or video) during the school day and, where relevant, during boarding and residential time.

This policy has been developed with regard to the Department for Education's statutory guidance Mobile Phones in Schools (updated 29 June 2026), which confirms that all schools, including independent schools, should be mobile phone-free environments by default, with any exception to this being by exception only. It should be read alongside the School's Behaviour Policy, with which it is fully aligned.

Scope

This policy applies to all pupils from Early Years through to the Sixth Form. It applies throughout the school day — including lessons, transition times between lessons, break and lunchtimes.

References in this policy to "mobile phones" should be read as including other communications and smart technology with similar functionality, such as smartwatches, tablets with SIM or messaging capability, or any device that can send/receive notifications or messages, or record audio or video, unless the context makes clear that a distinct device (e.g. a school-issued BYOD laptop) is meant.

3. Our Default Position: A Mobile Phone-Free School

In line with statutory guidance, The Webber Independent School operates as a mobile phone-free environment by default. Pupils should not have access to a personal mobile phone (whether switched on or off) during the school day, including in lessons, between lessons, at break and at lunchtime, except where this policy expressly provides for supervised or limited access

In the sections of the school where a 1 to 1 device scheme is in place to support learning, such devices are governed separately by the ICT Acceptable Use Policy.

Approach by Age Group

The School recognises that a single approach to storage and access is not appropriate across all age groups, and that expectations should reflect pupils' age, independence and, in the Sixth Form, their transition towards adult responsibilities. The sections below set out how this policy applies at each stage.

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and Primary

- Pupils in EYFS and Primary do not bring personal mobile phones into school. Where, exceptionally, a parent wishes their child to carry a phone for a journey to or from school (for example, on an older primary pupil's independent walk home), the phone must be handed in to the class teacher or school office on arrival and stored securely, switched off, until the end of the school day.
- Phones are not to be kept in a pupil's bag, coat pocket or tray during the school day.
- Where a pupil is found with a phone that has not been handed in, staff will confiscate it in line with Section 10 (Sanctions) and it will be returned to a parent/carer, not the pupil, unless otherwise agreed with the Head of the relevant section.
- Smartwatches with call, messaging or camera functionality are treated in the same way as mobile phones. Watches used only for telling the time are permitted.
- Staff will teach age-appropriate online safety content as part of the curriculum (including PSHE and computing), helping younger pupils understand why the School's approach keeps them safe.

Secondary (Years 7–11)

- Pupils in Years 7–11 may bring a mobile phone to school for journeys to and from school, but must not have access to it during the school day. On arrival, phones must be switched off (or set to silent/flight mode, per local arrangements) and [handed in to form tutors / deposited in lockable pouches or lockers / stored in bags which remain in lockers throughout the day — delete/adapt as appropriate to the School's chosen method].
- Phones must not be visible, used or audible in lessons, corridors, changing rooms, the dining hall, or at break and lunchtime.
- Phones are returned to pupils at the end of the school day, or handed to a parent/carer where a phone has been confiscated as a sanction
- Any pupil who needs to contact a parent during the day, or whose parent needs to contact them, should do so via the School office, Housemaster/Housemistress or Form Tutor, who will relay messages promptly.
- Secondary pupils are taught about the risks of mobile phone and social media use (including distraction, cyberbullying and the impact on wellbeing) through the PSHE and RSE/Health Education curriculum, in line with DfE guidance on relationships, sex and health education.

Implementation

It is for the Head, in consultation with the Designated Safeguarding Lead, to determine the practical method by which the School achieves a mobile phone-free environment for each age group (for example, lockers, lockable pouches, collection by form tutors, or a defined "hand-in" point). The chosen method(s) will be:

- clearly documented and consistently applied by all staff;
- straightforward for pupils and parents to understand and follow;

- proportionate to the age and needs of the pupils concerned; and
- kept under regular review, including in light of any attempts by pupils to circumvent the policy.

Current arrangements for Prep School are set out on page 16 of the Prep Handbook and Page 25 of the Senior Handbook. This is also communicated to parents at the point of admission and at the start of each academic year.

Communicating the Policy

This policy is published on the School website and in the parent/pupil handbook, and is communicated to the whole School community, including new families at induction. Staff, pupils and parents are made familiar with the policy, how it operates day to day, and the sanctions that apply for breaching it.

Parents are reminded that, where they need to contact their child urgently during the school day, they should telephone the School office (or the relevant Boarding House), rather than their child's mobile phone directly. Staff will relay messages promptly.

The Role of Staff

- All staff are expected to enforce this policy consistently across the School day, in every location and at every changeover between staff.
- Staff should not use their own mobile phone for personal reasons in front of pupils during the school day. This supports staff in modelling the behaviour expected of pupils.
- Staff may use a mobile phone or similar device where necessary for professional purposes — for example, to set homework, record rewards or sanctions, use multi-factor authentication for School systems, or in an emergency. This is outlined in the relevant staff policy and employment manual.

Expectations for Pupils

- Pupils will be reminded of this policy, and the sanctions for not following it, at the start of each academic year and at other points during the year as appropriate (for example, following transition into Secondary).
- Pupils are taught about the risks associated with mobile phone use, in school and more widely, including loss of focus, classroom disruption and the potential for bullying, as part of the PSHE, RSE and Health Education curriculum.
- Pupils are encouraged to see a mobile phone-free school day as something that benefits their learning, wellbeing and friendships, not simply as a restriction.

The Role of Parents

Parents play an important part in supporting this policy. The School asks parents to reinforce the reasons for a mobile phone-free school day at home, to avoid contacting their child directly by phone during the school day (using the School office instead), and to raise any questions or concerns about the policy with their child's Form Tutor, member of Senior Leadership Team or Headmistress, who will respond in a timely way.

Use of Sanctions and Confiscation

Breaches of this policy will be dealt with in accordance with the School's Behaviour Policy. Sanctions may include, depending on the nature and frequency of the breach and the pupil's age: a verbal warning, confiscation of the device for a period determined by the member of staff or Headmistress, a detention, or, for repeated or serious breaches, escalation in line with the Behaviour Policy.

- A phone may be confiscated where it is used, or is heard to ring or alert, in breach of this policy. Staff should consider whether confiscation is a proportionate response, taking into account the pupil's individual circumstances, including age and any SEND.
- Confiscated phones will be stored securely and returned to the pupil, or, for younger pupils or more serious/repeated breaches, released only to a parent or carer, as set out in the Behaviour Policy.
- Where a pupil's misuse of a phone gives staff cause to suspect the pupil is suffering, or at risk of, harm, staff will follow the School's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or a deputy) without delay.

Searching Pupils

The Head, or staff authorised by the Head, may search a pupil or their possessions where there are reasonable grounds to suspect the pupil is in possession of a mobile phone or similar device in breach of this policy, or any other item identified in the School's Behaviour Policy as an item that may be searched for. Searches will be carried out in accordance with the School's Searching, Screening and Confiscation procedures, having regard to DfE guidance on searching, screening and confiscation in schools.

Adaptations and Reasonable Adjustments

While the School operates a mobile phone-free environment by default, it recognises its duties under the Equality Act 2010 and, where relevant, the Children and Families Act 2014, and will make reasonable adjustments to this policy for individual pupils where necessary.

- Disabled pupils: where access to a mobile phone during the school day is necessary because of the nature of a pupil's disability, the School will consider whether allowing such access is a reasonable adjustment, in consultation with the pupil, their parents and the SENDCo.
- Medical needs: where a pupil's medical condition is managed using a device linked to a mobile phone (for example, continuous glucose monitoring for diabetes), the School will not prevent phone use that is necessary to manage that condition, in line with its Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy.
- Individual circumstances: the School recognises that some pupils' need for phone access may depend on their wider circumstances, including at home (for example, young carers). Such flexibility will be considered on a case-by-case basis with the relevant Head, and will not exempt a pupil from all restrictions — use will typically be limited to a specific purpose, time and location (for example, a Head office).
- Any agreed adaptation will be recorded and reviewed periodically to ensure it remains appropriate.

Mobile Phones Outside the School Day, on Trips and Journeys

- Day pupils travelling to and from school: the School recognises that some parents wish their child to carry a phone for safety reasons on the journey to and from school. Where this is the case, the

phone must be handed in and stored in accordance with the age-group arrangements, and used only before entering, or after leaving, the school site.

- School trips and residential visits: staff leading a trip will determine, and communicate to pupils and parents in advance, whether and how phones may be used, so that the educational purpose of the trip is not undermined by phone use, while ensuring pupils can raise welfare concerns if needed.
- Online safety: the School remains alert to online safety risks whether or not pupils have access to a phone during the school day, and pupils are always able to access a member of staff — and, where necessary, a phone — to raise a concern about something that has happened online. This is particularly important for boarders.

Filtering, Monitoring and Online Safety

The School maintains appropriate filtering and monitoring systems across its network and School-owned devices, which are reviewed regularly in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education, to reduce the risk of pupils accessing harmful or inappropriate content. This policy should be read alongside the School's Online Safety and ICT Acceptable Use Policies.

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