

Policy on the use of Mobile Phones in School



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Senior Deputy Head, Pastoral	August 2024	August 2025

The school recognises that personal communication through mobile technologies is an accepted part of everyday life for pupils, staff and parents/carers, and that smartphones have great utility. However, technologies need to be used safely and appropriately within school and must not detract from the educational and life experience gained through interaction with teachers and peers.

At SHHS, we feel strongly that pupils should be learning social skills and enhancing their emotional intelligence through face-to-face communication with the adults and young people in the school community. These skills are not inbuilt; they must be learned through trial and error and through observation. Research suggests that this learning can be stifled when face-to-face interaction is replaced by mobile phone interactions. There is also mounting evidence regarding the harm that a heavy diet of social media can cause, in addition to the potential dangers associated with the online world.

It is for these reasons that the school recommends that pupils do not have smartphones with internet access until they are at least in Year 9. If pupils are given a smartphone, the school recommends that robust checks and restrictions are put in place by parents to allow the young person to build up their exposure to social media and online dangers in a safe, controlled manner.

Mobile phones are not permitted to be used by any pupil in Year 7 to Year 11 in the school setting. Sixth Form pupils are only allowed to use their phones, as a privilege, within the Sixth Form building (Oakwood). Sixth Form students are not permitted to use their phones in the main building.

Expectations

- All use of personal devices and mobile phones will take place in accordance with the law and other appropriate school policies, including, but not limited to: *Anti-Bullying*, *Behaviour* and *Safeguarding and Child Protection*.
- Electronic devices of any kind that are brought onto site are the responsibility of the user at all times. The school accepts no responsibility for the loss, theft, damage or breach of security of such items on school premises
- The sending of abusive or inappropriate messages/content via mobile phones or personal devices is forbidden by any member of the community; any breaches will be dealt according to the behaviour policy or staff code of conduct and disciplinary policy
- All members of the community are advised to ensure that their mobile phones and personal devices do not contain any content which includes indecent images of a minor, may be considered to be offensive or derogatory, or would otherwise contravene the school behaviour or *Safeguarding and Child Protection* policies.

Pupils' Use of Personal Devices and Mobile Phones

- Pupils will be educated, through PSHEE lessons, form times, assemblies and the implementation of school policies, regarding the safe and appropriate use of personal devices and mobile phones
- Pupils in Years 7 – 11 are required to place their mobile phone in a Yondr pouch as they enter the school building. The pouch is to be locked, in front of the staff member on duty, and the pouch cannot be opened until the pupil leaves the building at the end of their school business on that day (this includes after school activities, performances and competitions.) Pupils will be made aware of the consequences of breaching this requirement, according to the appendix below.
- If a pupil needs to contact parents or carers they must use the school phone at reception; in very exceptional circumstances, they may be given permission to unlock their pouch to use their own device.
- Parents are advised to contact their child via the school office during school hours

- Mobile phones or personal devices will not be used by Year 7 – 11 pupils during lessons or formal school time unless as part of an approved and directed curriculum-based activity with consent from a member of staff.
- Mobile phones and personal devices must not be taken into examinations. Pupils found in possession of a mobile phone or personal device during an exam will be reported to the appropriate examining body. This may result in the pupil's grade in that examination, or all examinations, being nullified.
- Searches for and of mobile phone or personal devices will only be carried out in accordance with the relevant government guidance¹,
 - Schools are not required to inform parents before a search takes place or to seek consent for a search for a prohibited item, or item which a member of staff reasonably suspects has been or is likely to be used to commit an offence or to cause personal injury or damage to the property of any person
 - Where the person conducting the search finds an electronic device that is prohibited by the school rules or that they reasonably suspect has been, or is likely to be, used to commit an offence or cause personal injury or damage to property, they may examine any data or files on the device where there is a good reason to do so. They may also delete data or files if they think there is a good reason to do so, unless they are going to give the device to the police.
 - If there is a suspicion that material on a pupil's personal device or mobile phone may be illegal or may provide evidence relating to a criminal offence, the device will be handed over to the police for further investigation (in this instance, the phone should be switched off until handed to the police)
 - The confiscation and searching of a phone or other digital device will normally be carried out in consultation with a senior member of staff.

Staff Use of Personal Devices and Mobile Phones

- Members of staff will ensure that the use of personal phones and devices takes place in accordance with the law, as well as relevant school policy and procedures, such as: *Confidentiality, Safeguarding and Child Protection, Data Security and Acceptable Use Agreements*.
- Images of pupils must not be stored on personal devices. Any image taken on personal devices must be transferred to school or GDST systems as soon as reasonably possible and the personal copy permanently removed.
- In the Senior School staff are reminded not to use their mobile phones within sight of pupils, acting as role models for pupils. It is not appropriate to check messages on phones during lessons or other school activities or whilst meeting with pupils. Staff mobile phones should only be used in staff-only spaces (eg. departmental offices)
- In the Junior School, staff are not allowed to use their personal mobile phones when in direct contact with children. In the EYFS, staff are required to keep any personal devices locked away at all times and may only use their personal devices when children are not present.

Visitors' Use of Personal Devices and Mobile Phones

- Parents, carers and visitors (including volunteers and contractors) must use their mobile phones and personal devices in school in accordance with the school's *Acceptable use Agreement* and other associated policies, such as *Anti-Bullying* and *Safeguarding and Child Protection policies*

¹ See [Searching, screening and confiscation: Advice for headteachers, school staff and governing bodies](#) DfE January 2018

- Information is provided to inform parents, carers and visitors of expectations of use, including reminding parents not to take photos of children in school unless they are given permission to do so – this includes performances and competitions with multiple participants.
- Members of staff are expected to challenge visitors if they have concerns and must always inform the DSL of any breaches of school policy.

Advice for handling cases of cyberbullying, sexting, suspected grooming or other concerns about children at risk through mobile phone use:

- Mobile phone providers have malicious or nuisance call, text or image centres set up and procedures in place to deal with such incidents. They can help pupils change their number, if necessary. They will also work closely with the police, should they become involved
- The largest of the social media platforms have facilities to report abuse or false profiles. Pupils should be directed to use this wherever possible (however expectations of results based on this reporting should be tempered.)
- Explicit images of young people under the age of 18 should never be forwarded on from a pupil's phone. If such images are on the pupil's phone, the phone should be switched off, phone retained by the member of staff and the police called, so that they can do their necessary work to determine the source of the photos and delete them entirely. (This is subject to reference to the relevant government guidance on the thresholds for responses to youth produced sexual imagery. ²)
- In any other cases of potential abuse online, using the mobile phone, evidence should not be deleted. It should be retained for use as evidence. If it is the case that the pupil would like to shut down their social media account in order to make the abuse stop, screen shots should be obtained of anything offensive before this happens. In serious cases that may involve the police, they should be consulted before any accounts are closed down.
- CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection) should be consulted in cases of suspected grooming – this is the arm of the police tasked with keeping young people safe online. Reports can be made, which they will investigate, and they have other sources of information to offer advice.

Appendix A: Procedures and sanctions for mobile phone use in the school setting.

Junior School

- Any Junior School pupil with a mobile phone, will hand it in to reception when they arrive to the building. They can collect their phone when they are finished with their school business for the day

Years 7 – 11

- Pupils are expected to demonstrate, to the member of staff on duty, that their phone is placed inside their Yondr pouch and that the pouch is locked when they arrive at school
- Pupils who have forgotten their phone at home on the day will sign a declaration to this effect that will be shared with parents
- Pupils who have forgotten their Yondr pouch on the day will hand their phone in to reception and will be able to pick up their phone at the end of their business at school that day
- Pupils whose Yondr pouches are damaged beyond use will be issued with a new one, and parents will be charged £25 for the replacement – if damage is deemed to be intentional, a sanction will be applied

² See 'Sharing Nudes and Semi-Nudes': <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sharing-nudes-and-semi-nudes-advice-for-education-settings-working-with-children-and-young-people/sharing-nudes-and-semi-nudes-advice-for-education-settings-working-with-children-and-young-people>

- Pupils who lose their Yondr pouch will be issued with a new one, and parents will be charged £25 for the replacement
- Pupils found to have breached the rules around phone use (eg. having not locked the pouch, accessing the phone during the day, intentionally damaging the pouch, etc.) will be subject to escalating sanctions:
 - 1st offence: Phone to be confiscated until the end of the day; after-school detention to be served
 - 2nd offence: Phone to be confiscated until the end of the day; SLT detention to be served; phone to be handed in at reception every morning for two weeks
 - 3rd and subsequent offences: More serious sanctions to be applied on a case-by-case basis
 - *If a second phone is found, this un-pouched phone will be confiscated for a full week in the first instance and for a half-term for a second infraction (this is on the basis that another phone was in the pouch and so the contraband phone is not 'necessary' in that child's life.) The above sanctions will also apply.
- A pupil whose phone rings or makes other noises during the school day will be required to go to reception to unlock the pouch, in order to turn the phone off and then relock the pouch. They will be issued with a conduct mark.

Sixth Form

- Pupils are not allowed to have mobile phones on view or in use within the main school building
- Pupils are expected to use mobile phones within the Sixth Form building (Oakwood) respectfully and without creating a distraction to others
- Pupils must not use mobile phones in lessons unless specifically asked to or give permission to by their teacher
- Pupils are expected to model safe mobile phone use to younger pupils, when in the vicinity of the school building, for example not having their phone out on show or being distracted by their phone whilst walking along the Finchley Road pavement or crossing the road
- Pupils found to have breached these rules will be subject to escalating sanctions:

Parents / visitors

- Parents and visitors attending performances and competitions will be reminded that they are not to use their phone to record or take photos of groups of pupils without express permission of the school. This is for safeguarding reasons.

Appendix B: digital device guidance for parents

The following document was created in order to help parents work together to keep their daughters safe and healthy in their relationship with the digital world.

Rethinking Smartphones

At South Hampstead, we prioritise wellbeing. We feel strongly about protecting young people in all areas of their lives and this includes their use of mobile phones and Internet-based technology.

The digital world is vast - a giant landscape that children need a level of maturity and self-understanding to navigate safely and successfully. They need the adults in their life to support their safe and gradual exposure so that they are not overwhelmed or put at risk. The addictive nature of social media is not children's fault, but it is very real. Adults must protect young people from the harmful effects of spending too high a proportion of their down-time online.

We encourage parents to be brave about setting firm boundaries for their daughter's mobile phone ownership and use. Children rely on adults to set boundaries, remain consistent and be resilient to external pressures. Children thrive when parented authoritatively and they prefer to know where they stand when it comes to rules and expectations. We know that children want to have the same access to technology that their peers have. Therefore, we strongly encourage parents to work together to establish similar boundaries so that all pupils can be protected, and parents are able to confidently reinforce the constraints they know are right for their children.

At South Hampstead, we believe in the following principles and strongly endorse the related practices:

OUR PRINCIPLE: Early smartphone ownership and use enables access to social media and group messaging before young people are equipped to cope with the content and the pressures. This can lead to associated mental health risks and impaired development of vital in-person social skills.

IN PRACTICE: *Children before Year 9 do not need and should not have a smartphone. If children are given a smartphone after Year 9, their use should be phased in gradually, monitored and constrained. Children before Year 9 should not be allowed direct access to social media apps via other devices, such as tablets, laptops or PCs. This may include, but is not limited to Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, WhatsApp and Facebook. Whilst YouTube is not a conventional social media app, it contains inappropriate, unfiltered content and access should be restricted and closely monitored.*

OUR PRINCIPLE: Age ratings are applied to games, films and video content for good reason, based on expert understanding of developmental phases and age-appropriateness of sexual and violent content.

IN PRACTICE: *Children's use of media should stay within the age ratings applied by professionals. Parents should monitor and restrict their children's viewing accordingly and discuss with their children the reasons for adhering to the advice given.*

OUR PRINCIPLE: Children need good, uninterrupted sleep, every night. For children under the age of 13, the recommendation is 9 to 12 hours. Regular and adequate sleep supports overall health, growth and brain development. It also helps young people cope with the ups and downs of their daily lives and supports their wellbeing. The use of mobile phones and social media is incompatible with good sleep.

IN PRACTICE: *Children should have no access to mobile phones and other tech gadgets at least one hour before bedtime. For children younger than Year 9, this is likely to be before 8pm. Mobiles phones and other Internet accessing technology should not be allowed in the bedroom overnight. Children should be provided with an alarm clock.*

OUR PRINCIPLE: Children need regular and prolonged breaks from the intensity of online social interactions, especially group chats. Young people's brains need a rest from the pressure to participate, respond and react to the constant chatter of peers. It is important both that they have the time away from group communication and that they learn the skill of stepping away regularly, for their own long-term wellbeing.

IN PRACTICE: *Young people who have been given a smartphone should have their time on the device monitored, with enforced time away from the device. Phones should not be allowed in the same room where homework is being completed or in the bedroom at night.*

OUR PRINCIPLE: Children should have the freedom to play and interact safely in other family homes without being exposed to inappropriate material or having unsafe, unrestricted access.

IN PRACTICE: *Parents hosting playdates and sleepovers with children before Year 9 are encouraged to collect in mobile phones and tech gadgets with unrestricted access to the Internet, to ensure that the visit focuses on valuable in-person interaction and that all the children are kept safe. After Year 9, parents should still consider this action as young people are likely to benefit significantly from spending time together without the distraction of social media.*

OUR PRINCIPLE: Children deserve to be kept safe from sexual predators who are manipulative, skilled and persistent in employing methods to connect with young people. In the UK, the National Crime Agency estimates that there are 550,000 – 850,000 people who pose a sexual threat to the children of the UK; most of them operate online.

IN PRACTICE: *Children before Year 9 should not be given a smartphone and their use of tablets, laptops and PCs should be closely monitored and restricted. If children are given a smartphone after Year 9, parents should monitor their use of social media and messaging apps, ensuring that security settings are set to the maximum extent possible. Parents should converse regularly with their child about their online activity and anything that has caused them worry. Children should feel safe sharing information about things that have occurred online without fear of being in trouble or being held responsible for finding themselves in a difficult position, at the hands of an algorithm or person who has exploited their vulnerability.*

OUR PRINCIPLE: Children are entitled to have the freedom to make friends, to experience fallouts and to have the time to navigate social knots within a timescale that is not accelerated or aggravated by online interactions.

IN PRACTICE: *Children should be given strong encouragement to deal with social strife off-line and in-person. They should be deterred from using group chats to replace in-person meet-ups and their use of group chats should be time limited. In-person time together, without the intrusiveness of mobile phones, should be strongly encouraged.*

OUR PRINCIPLE: Schools need to be phone-free spaces. This is so that young people can fully engage with all the formative experiences of the school day. They also need to learn how to be away from their phones for long stretches, enabling them to be able to do this for themselves later in life.

IN PRACTICE: *South Hampstead is a phone-free space, with pupils placing phones of all description in locked pouches for the duration of their school-based activities. Firm procedures and sanctions will be in place to ensure that pupils all adhere to this rule and support this important principle.*

This guidance is supported by our partners at Tooled Up Education who provide a wealth of information to support parents. If you have not yet signed up, register here using the school's unique pin SHHS0301: <https://www.tooledupeducation.com/register>

Appendix C: duties to enforce pouching of phones at the start of the day

There will be duty slots as follows:

- 7:35 – 8:00 – one duty staff member
- 8:00 – 8:30 – two teaching staff members
- 8:10 – 8:40 – one SLT staff member

Appendix D: pupil procedures upon entering the building



Yondr Pouch Reminders

WHEN YOU ARRIVE AT SCHOOL

1. Turn off your phone and open your Yondr pouch using the unlocking device outside the building
2. Enter the atrium and head towards the member of staff on duty
3. **When that staff member is watching you**, put your phone in your Yondr pouch and lock it
4. Show the member of staff that your Yondr pouch is properly locked by turning it upside down – if they don't see you do it, you may be asked to unlock/start again!
5. Wait until they acknowledge it's properly locked before heading into the building

WHAT HAPPENS IF I HAVE AN EARLY MORNING CLUB?

There will be a member of staff on duty from 7.40am; you will need to wait in reception until they arrive then follow the process above

WHAT IF I FORGET MY YONDR POUCH?

Your phone will be held at reception and you will need to collect it when leaving the building after your last activity of the day

WHAT IF MY YONDR POUCH ISN'T WORKING?

Your phone will be held at reception and you will need to collect it when leaving the building after your last activity of the day; your parents will be asked to purchase a replacement pouch

WHAT IF I FORGET MY PHONE OR DON'T BRING IT IN?

You will need to sign a declaration to say so, and your parents will be notified. You may be asked to show the contents of your bag, pockets and locker

If you have any other questions, just ask your tutor/Head of Year.