



TCAT MOBILE PHONE POLICY September 2026

Last Reviewed	September 2026
Next Review	September 2027
TCAT Lead	Rebecca Leatherbarrow

SERVE CHALLENGE EMPOWER

Version	Date	Action
1	01/09/2026	Centralised policy ratified
2		
3		
4		
5		

This policy is a Trust-wide policy and applies without exception to all staff, students, trustees and governors who attend or work at all academies and settings in the Trust or in the central Trust structure.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION AND AIMS	3
2. RELEVANT GUIDANCE	3
3. RELATED TRUST AND ACADEMY POLICIES	4
4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES	4
5. USE OF MOBILE PHONES BY STAFF	4
6. USE OF MOBILE PHONES BY PUPILS	5
7. USE OF MOBILE PHONES BY PARENTS/CARERS, VOLUNTEERS AND VISITORS	6
8. LOSS, THEFT OR DAMAGE	7
9. MONITORING AND REVIEW	7
APPENDIX 1: ACADEMY-SPECIFIC MOBILE PHONE PROCEDURES	8
APPENDIX 2: MOBILE PHONE EXCEPTION REQUEST AND AGREEMENT	9
APPENDIX 3: TEMPLATE MOBILE PHONE INFORMATION SLIP FOR VISITORS	10

1. INTRODUCTION AND AIMS

The Challenge Academy Trust, TCAT, sets out in this policy our Trust-wide expectations for the use of mobile phones and similar smart devices across all academies, Trust settings and central services.

- Ensure that TCAT academies are mobile phone-free environments by default during the school day
- Support safe, responsible and lawful use of mobile phones and similar devices where a clearly documented exception applies
- Provide clear expectations for pupils, staff, parents/carers, visitors, volunteers, trustees, governors, contractors and anyone otherwise engaged by TCAT or an academy
- Support TCAT's wider safeguarding, child protection, behaviour, online safety, data protection, acceptable use, staff code of conduct and recording/reporting policies

This is a centralised Trust policy. Each academy must maintain an academy-specific appendix confirming its local arrangements for implementing this policy, including how devices are stored, monitored and returned.

Academy appendices must explain how this policy is implemented locally, but they must not weaken the central Trust expectation that pupils under the age of 16 do not access or use mobile phones or similar smart devices during the school day unless a documented exception applies.

This policy also addresses the challenges posed by mobile phones and similar devices in schools, including:

- Risks to child protection
- Data protection issues
- Risk of theft, loss or damage
- Appropriate use of technology for learning purposes

Throughout this policy, 'mobile phones' includes mobile phones and other personal devices with communication, recording, notification, internet-enabled or smart functionality, including smartwatches or smart glasses, unless an academy's appendix states otherwise for a specific and justified reason.

References to pupils include all children and young people on roll or attending TCAT provision, including early years children, school-age pupils and post-16 learners, unless the context requires otherwise.

2. RELEVANT GUIDANCE

This policy has regard to section 36 of the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 and the Department for Education's statutory guidance on mobile phones in schools, which became statutory on 29 June 2026 and should be followed from 1 September 2026. The guidance is for multi-academy trusts, trust boards, proprietors, governing bodies, school leaders and staff, and applies to maintained schools, academies, free

schools, non-maintained special schools and independent schools. It expects schools to be mobile phone-free environments by default and to prohibit pupil use of mobile phones and other smart technology with similar functionality throughout the school day, including lessons, the time between lessons, breaktimes and lunchtime.

This policy should also be read alongside DfE behaviour in schools' guidance, Searching, Screening and Confiscation guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026, Working Together to Safeguard Children, DfE data protection guidance for schools, statutory attendance guidance, and the statutory Early Years Foundation Stage framework for group and school-based providers where academies have provision for children from age 2 to the end of reception.

For academies with nursery or reception provision, including provision for children aged 2 to 5, this policy must be implemented consistently with the EYFS statutory framework. Mobile phones, smart devices, cameras and image-recording equipment must never undermine the safety, supervision, privacy or dignity of children in early years provision.

3. RELATED TRUST AND ACADEMY POLICIES

This policy should be read in conjunction with all relevant Trust and academy policies and procedures, including but not limited to:

- TCAT Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- TCAT Behaviour Policy
- TCAT Code of Conduct
- TCAT Online Safety Policy
- TCAT LADO and Low-Level Concerns Policy
- TCAT Whistleblowing Policy

4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1 STAFF

All staff (including teachers, support staff and supply staff) are expected to support implementation of this policy and challenge breaches where it is safe and appropriate to do so, in line with academy behaviour procedures. Breaches should be addressed consistently and proportionately.

The headteacher or principal is responsible for implementing this policy at academy level, including across any early years, primary, secondary and post-16 provision, and ensuring that the academy appendix is accurate, practical and communicated clearly to pupils, staff and parents/carers.

Staff will address any questions or concerns from parents/carers quickly and clearly communicate the reasons for prohibiting the use of mobile phones.

4.2 TRUST, ACADEMY AND GOVERNANCE OVERSIGHT

The Trust Safeguarding Lead will keep this policy under review in line with statutory guidance, safeguarding expectations and Trust policy cycles. The Board of Trustees has overall responsibility for ensuring that Trust policies support statutory safeguarding, behaviour and welfare duties.

Headteachers/principals are responsible for local implementation and for ensuring that any academy-specific procedures are proportionate, consistently applied and reflected in the academy appendix. Local governing bodies may monitor how the policy is understood and implemented as part of wider safeguarding, behaviour and culture oversight.

5. USE OF MOBILE PHONES BY STAFF

Staff must model the expectations set for pupils. Personal mobile phones must not be used for personal reasons in front of pupils during the school day. Any use during pupil contact time must be by exception only and must be consistent with safeguarding, professional conduct, data protection and online safety expectations.

5.1 PERSONAL MOBILE PHONES

Staff, trustees, governors, volunteers, contractors and anyone otherwise engaged by TCAT or an academy must not use personal mobile phones during pupil contact time or where pupils are present, unless there is a specific authorised reason. Personal mobile phone use should be limited to non-contact time and staff-only spaces.

Where a member of staff needs temporary or ongoing access to a personal phone for a specific reason, this must be agreed by the headteacher/principal or appropriate senior leader. Any arrangement must be reasonable, proportionate, non-discriminatory, recorded where appropriate and reviewed if circumstances change. Where no arrangement has been agreed, staff should use the academy office number as the emergency contact point.

5.2 DATA PROTECTION AND SAFEGUARDING

Staff may access authorised Trust systems, including email, on a personal mobile phone where this is necessary and permitted by TCAT procedures. Staff are responsible for doing so securely and must not store, download, photograph, record or share pupil information, confidential information, safeguarding records or other personal data on a personal device. Any use of a personal device for work purposes must be proportionate, professional and in line with TCAT data protection, acceptable use, online safety, safeguarding and recording/reporting procedures.

Staff must not use personal devices, personal contact details, personal social media or private messaging apps to communicate with pupils or parents/carers unless explicitly authorised through a documented academy procedure.

Staff must not use personal mobile phones to take photographs, videos or audio recordings of pupils, pupils' work, staff, parents/carers or anything else that could identify a pupil. Where images or recordings are required for an educational, safeguarding or operational purpose, academy-approved equipment and procedures must be used.

5.3 WORK PURPOSES AND WORK PHONES

In limited circumstances, staff may need to use a personal mobile phone or Trust/academy-provided phone for authorised work purposes, such as multi-factor authentication, emergency arrangements, off-site trips or residential visits. Any such use must be proportionate, professional and in line with relevant TCAT and academy policies and procedures.

5.4 CONCERNS OR BREACHES

Staff who fail to follow this policy may be subject to proportionate action in line with TCAT employment, conduct, safeguarding and disciplinary procedures.

Any concern that may indicate a safeguarding allegation, low-level concern, data breach or misuse of technology must be reported through the relevant TCAT and academy procedure without delay.

6. USE OF MOBILE PHONES BY PUPILS

Pupils in early years, primary and secondary provision must not access or use mobile phones or similar smart devices during the school day, including lessons, movement between lessons, breaktimes and lunchtimes, unless a specific exception has been authorised and recorded. Where an academy has sixth-form or post-16 provision, local arrangements for post-16 learners must be set out in the academy appendix. The school day and the precise local arrangements for each academy are set out in the academy appendix.

Academies must ensure that local procedures allow proportionate flexibility for pupils with specific medical, safeguarding or disability-related needs, for example pupils who require a smart device to monitor a health condition. Any exception must be documented, agreed with relevant staff and reviewed as appropriate.

Reasonable adjustments will be considered where required in line with equality duties. Any adjustment or exception must be proportionate, documented and reviewed through the academy's local procedure.

TCAT recognises that academies may use different practical models to achieve a mobile phone-free environment. These may include locked pouches, lockers, phones being handed in to the academy office, a

no-phones-on-site approach, or an 'off and away' model where pupils do not access or use their phone at any point during the school day and the model is clearly understood, consistently applied and effectively monitored. The chosen model must be clearly explained in the academy appendix.

Pupils will be taught, through the curriculum and wider pastoral work, about the risks associated with mobile phone and smart device use, including distraction from learning, bullying, harassment, online harms, image sharing, AI-generated abuse, privacy, data protection and safeguarding risks. Pupils should understand the reasons for a mobile phone-free environment and the importance of following academy expectations.

Where online harms or image-based abuse are identified or suspected, including AI-generated images, deepfakes, digitally altered images, nudes or semi-nudes, staff must treat this as a safeguarding concern and follow TCAT safeguarding and recording/reporting procedures without delay.

6.1 USE OF SMARTWATCHES AND SIMILAR DEVICES BY PUPILS

Smartwatches and similar devices may be included within academy restrictions where they have communication, recording, notification or internet-enabled functionality. Each academy must state in its appendix how smartwatches and similar devices will be managed.

6.2 EXCEPTIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL CIRCUMSTANCES AND POST-16 PUPILS

An academy may permit a pupil to possess or use a mobile phone or smart device where there is a documented safeguarding, medical, disability-related or other exceptional reason. This must be agreed by an appropriate senior leader and recorded using the academy's local procedure.

Requests for an exception should normally be made by parents/carers to the academy using the process set out in the academy appendix. Where the need relates to safeguarding or medical arrangements, the DSL, SENDCo, pastoral lead, school nurse or another relevant professional may be involved as appropriate.

Any pupil granted an exception must follow the academy's acceptable use expectations and any individual agreement put in place.

Where an academy has sixth-form or post-16 provision within a wider school setting, the academy appendix must set out whether post-16 learners may access mobile phones during the school day and, if so, where, when and under what conditions. Arrangements must be clear, proportionate and consistent with safeguarding, behaviour, online safety, data protection, learning and wellbeing expectations, including consideration of excessive screen time, social media use and lesson distractions. They must not undermine the mobile phone-free environment for younger pupils.

Misuse of mobile phones or similar devices by post-16 pupils will be addressed in line with the academy's behaviour policy, safeguarding procedures and any post-16 expectations set out in the appendix.

6.3 SANCTIONS, CONFISCATION AND SEARCHES

Breaches of this policy will be addressed in line with the TCAT Behaviour Policy, the academy's local behaviour procedures and all relevant statutory guidance.

Any confiscation, storage, return of devices, searches, screening or related action must be managed in line with the TCAT Behaviour Policy, the academy appendix and all relevant statutory guidance.

Where misuse may indicate a safeguarding concern, staff must follow TCAT safeguarding and recording/reporting procedures without delay.

7. USE OF MOBILE PHONES BY PARENTS/CARERS, VOLUNTEERS AND VISITORS

Parents and carers are encouraged to reinforce this policy at home, including the risks associated with mobile phone use and the benefits of a mobile phone-free environment.

Parents/carers, visitors and volunteers, including trustees, governors and contractors, must follow this policy while on academy or Trust premises and must comply with any local instructions given by staff.

This means:

- Not using mobile phones where pupils are present, unless authorised by staff
- Not taking photographs, videos or audio recordings of pupils, staff or academy activity unless this has been expressly permitted
- Using any permitted photographs or recordings for personal use only and not posting them online or sharing them without consent
- Following any visitor information provided by the academy on arrival or before an event

Parents/carers, visitors and volunteers will be informed of the rules for mobile phone use when they sign in at reception or attend a public event at the academy.

In early years settings, personal devices and smart technology must be managed in line with EYFS requirements and local safeguarding procedures so that children's safety, supervision, privacy and dignity are protected.

Staff are not expected to personally enforce this policy with visitors in circumstances where this would be unsafe or inappropriate. Concerns about visitor compliance should be referred to reception, the visit host, the DSL or an appropriate senior leader.

Parents/carers or volunteers supervising trips or residential visits must not:

- Use their phone to contact other parents/carers, unless directed by the responsible member of staff
- Take photos or recordings of pupils, their work, or anything else that could identify a pupil

Parents/carers or volunteers supporting trips must follow staff instructions and refer any concerns to the responsible member of staff.

Parents/carers must use the academy office as the first point of contact if they need to get in touch with their child during the school day. They must not try to contact their child on their personal mobile during the school day.

8. LOSS, THEFT OR DAMAGE

Where pupils are permitted to bring mobile phones or similar devices onto academy premises, they and their parents/carers remain responsible for the device unless the academy has taken possession of it through a formal collection, storage or confiscation process.

TCAT and its academies accept no responsibility for mobile phones or similar devices that are lost, damaged or stolen on academy premises, on academy transport, during visits or trips, or while pupils are travelling to or from the academy, except where the academy has taken possession of the device and has failed to follow its own secure storage procedures.

Where a device is confiscated or collected by staff, it must be stored securely in the location and manner set out in the academy appendix. The appendix must also state who is responsible for logging, storing and returning devices.

Lost devices should be handed to the academy office or other named location in the academy appendix. The academy will make reasonable efforts to contact the owner.

9. MONITORING AND REVIEW

TCAT is committed to ensuring that this policy supports safeguarding, behaviour, learning, attendance, wellbeing and a calm academy culture. This policy will be reviewed in line with the TCAT policy review cycle, or earlier if statutory guidance, safeguarding expectations, inspection findings or operational learning indicate that changes are required.

Concerns about implementation should be raised with the headteacher/principal in the first instance. Trust-wide concerns or queries about policy interpretation may be referred to the Trust Safeguarding Lead.

Academies must ensure that local procedures are communicated clearly, applied consistently and able to demonstrate how exceptions are recorded and reviewed.

APPENDIX 1: ACADEMY-SPECIFIC MOBILE PHONE PROCEDURES

Each academy must complete and maintain this appendix so that pupils, staff and parents/carers understand exactly how the Trust-wide policy is implemented locally.

The academy appendix must confirm:

1. Whether pupils are allowed to bring mobile phones or similar devices onto academy premises.
2. The academy's age range and provision type, including whether the academy has nursery, reception, primary, secondary, sixth-form or post-16 provision.
3. The academy's chosen model: pouches, lockers, handed in to the office, off and away, no phones on site, or another agreed model.
4. How the chosen model ensures pupils in early years, primary and secondary provision do not access or use mobile phones or similar smart devices at any point during the school day, including lessons, movement between lessons, breaktimes and lunchtimes, except where a documented exception applies.

5. When the school day starts and ends for the purpose of this policy, including any separate arrangements for early years, sixth-form or post-16 provision.
6. Where devices must be stored and who is responsible for collection, storage and return.
7. How smartwatches and similar devices are managed.
8. How any Bring Your Own Device arrangements are kept separate from mobile phones.
9. What exceptions may be agreed and how these are requested, recorded and reviewed.
10. Post-16 arrangements, if applicable, including permitted use, restricted areas or times, expectations in shared spaces and how phone use will be managed to support learning, wellbeing and safeguarding.
11. How EYFS-specific arrangements operate, if applicable, including personal devices, smart technology, photographs, recordings, supervision, privacy and screen use.
12. How trustees, governors, visitors, volunteers and contractors are informed of and expected to follow the academy's local arrangements.
13. How breaches, confiscation, storage, return of devices, searches, screening or related action will be managed in line with the TCAT Behaviour Policy, local academy procedures and all relevant statutory guidance.
14. How expectations are communicated to pupils, staff, parents/carers and visitors.
15. Who is responsible for reviewing the appendix and keeping it up to date.

APPENDIX 2: MOBILE PHONE EXCEPTION REQUEST AND AGREEMENT

This form should be used where a pupil requires an exception to the academy's usual mobile phone procedures for a documented safeguarding, medical, disability-related or other exceptional reason.

The form should usually be completed with parents/carers. Depending on the pupil's age and understanding, it may also be appropriate for the pupil to sign.

Date:	
Pupil name:	
Year group/class:	
Parent/carer(s) name(s):	
Reason for exception: • Medical need • Safeguarding or welfare need • Disability-related reasonable adjustment	

• Young carer responsibilities • Travel or safety arrangement agreed by the academy • School trip, residential or academy activity where device use has been authorised • Other exceptional reason agreed by a senior leader	
---	--

The academy has agreed to allow the pupil named above to bring or use a mobile phone or similar device because there is a documented need.

Pupils who are granted an exception must follow the Trust policy; academy appendix and any individual conditions recorded on this form.

The academy may amend or withdraw permission if the pupil does not follow the agreed conditions, or if the arrangement is no longer required.

Parent/carers signature: _____

Pupil signature (where appropriate): _____

Authorising senior leader signature: _____

APPENDIX 3: TEMPLATE MOBILE PHONE INFORMATION SLIP FOR VISITORS

This template can be adapted by academies for reception, visitor lanyards, safeguarding information sheets or event information.

Use of mobile phones and similar devices on TCAT academy premises

Our academy is a mobile phone-free environment for pupils during the school day.

- Please keep your mobile phone on silent or vibrate while on academy premises.
- Please do not use your phone where pupils are present unless authorised by staff.
- Please do not take photographs, videos or audio recordings of pupils, staff or academy activity unless this has been expressly permitted.
- If you need to use your phone, please ask reception or your staff contact where this can be done.

The academy accepts no responsibility for phones that are lost, damaged or stolen while you are on the academy grounds.

A full copy of the TCAT Mobile Phone Policy and the academy appendix is available on request.