



The **Sutton** Academy

Mobile Phone Guidance



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1. Introduction and aims

1.1 Aims

Every school has a duty to create an environment that is calm, safe and free from distraction so all students, whatever their background, can learn and thrive. One of the greatest challenges facing schools is the presence of mobile phones. Today, by the age of 12, 97% of students own a mobile phone.

Mobile phones risk unnecessary distraction, disruption and diversion. In lessons, this not only distracts the single student using the phone, but disrupts the lesson for a whole class, and diverts teachers' efforts away from learning.

We owe it to our children to do what we can to remove distractions and enable them to be fully present and engaged in the classroom. We also owe it to our students to keep them safe at school. One in five students have experienced bullying online. By removing mobile phones from the school day, we can create a safe space where students are protected from the risks and dangers associated with social media and cyber-bullying, as well as the peer pressure and possible stigma associated with owning what are often expensive devices.

Three in ten students cite making and maintaining friendships and their mental health as a cause of worry, anxiety or depression. By removing mobile phones, students can spend more time staying active and socialising face to face with their peers, activities which have a positive impact on wellbeing. The academy can help students develop these habits, which will in turn help them thrive outside of the academy.

During recent national stakeholder engagement, headteachers and leaders reported that after removing mobile phones from the school day, the whole culture of the school changes for the

better. The environment becomes safer, protecting students not only from the short-term distraction of a notification but also the background noise of their lives outside school. Without their mobile phone at school, students have the headspace and calm to focus on their lessons.

Today's children are growing up in an increasingly complex world, living their lives on and offline. This presents many exciting opportunities – but also challenges. By prohibiting mobile phones, schools can create safe and calm environments free from distraction so all students can receive the education they deserve.

Our policy aims to:

- Promote, and set an example for, safe and responsible phone use
- Set clear guidelines for the use of mobile phones for students, staff, parents, volunteers and visitors to the academy
- Support the school's other policies, Safeguarding, Behaviour for Learning and Anti bullying

This policy also aims to address some of the challenges posed by mobile phones in the academy, such as:

- Risks to child protection
- Data protection issues
- Potential for lesson disruption
- Risk of theft, loss, or damage

2.1 Rationale

Aside from the safeguarding issue the rationale for this is that it has been shown that the effect of banning mobile phones from academy premises adds up to the equivalent of an extra week's learning over a student's academic year. This is according to research by Louis-Philippe Beland and Richard Murphy, published by the Centre for Economic Performance at the London School of Economics.

"Communication: The Impact of Mobile Phones on Student Performance" found that after academy's banned mobile phones, the test scores of students aged 16 improved by 6.4%. The economists reckon that this is the "equivalent of adding five days to the academy year". According to Beland and Murphy, a phone ban produced improvements in test scores among students, with the lowest-achieving students gaining twice as much as average students. The ban had a greater positive impact on students with special education needs and those eligible for free academy meals, while having no discernible effect on high achievers. "We found that not only did student achievement improve, but also that low-achieving and low income students gained the most. We found the impact of banning phones for these students was equivalent to an additional hour a week in academy, or to increasing the academy year by five days."

2. Roles and responsibilities

2.1 Staff

All staff should consistently enforce the school's policy on the use of mobile phones. Staff should not use their own mobile phone for personal reasons in front of students throughout the school day. This will empower staff to better challenge students to meet the school expectations and effectively enforce the prohibition of mobile phones throughout the school day. There may be occasions where it is appropriate for a teacher to use a mobile phone or similar device, for instance to issue homework, issue rewards and sanctions or use multi-factor authentication.

2.2 Students

All students should be clear on the academy's policy on prohibiting the use of mobile phones and will be reminded of the policy, and the consequences and sanctions for not following it, at the start of each academy year and again, where appropriate, at regular intervals. Students will be taught the risks that are associated with the use of mobile phones, both in the academy and more broadly, to ensure they understand the decision being taken by the academy to prohibit the use of mobile phones throughout the academy day. These risks can include a loss of focus in lessons, classroom disruption and an increase in bullying. Students will also be taught the benefits of having a mobile phone-free environment and be encouraged to see such an environment as desirable and valuable. This will help to create intrinsic motivation to support the academy culture.

*** refer to behaviour policy

2.3 Parents

Parents have an important role in supporting the academy's policy on prohibiting the use of mobile phones and will be encouraged to reinforce and discuss the policy at home as appropriate, including the risks associated with mobile phone use and the benefits of a mobile phone-free environment. Where parents need to contact their child during the school day, they should contact the academy office, where staff are aware of the academy's policy on relaying messages and facilitating contact. Where parents have questions or concerns, staff will address these in a timely manner and clearly communicate the reasons for prohibiting the use of mobile phones.

3. Use of mobile phones by students

3.1 Student Use

The academy recognises that parents/carers in the community feel the need for their children to have access to a mobile phone for communication home. This helps with safeguarding and child protection especially in the long dark winter months. The Sutton Academy supports this approach wholeheartedly. To that end the academy has adopted the following mobile phone best use policy:

- Students are allowed to bring mobile phones to and from academy to ensure their personal safety at all times.
- **“Never used, seen or heard”** Students must not use a mobile device, smart watch or electronic device including headphones anywhere on the academy site, except under the specific direction of a teacher.
- 6th form can use devices in the 6th form area only. It is prohibited for 6th form students to use their mobile phones in front of younger students. 6th form students remain subject to the academy’s behavior policy and misuse of their phone can result in confiscation with the phone handed to the 6th form year team.
- If a student brings their phone to the academy then on arrival it should be switched off and kept out of sight. It should not be used, seen or heard (including vibrate) throughout the academy day.
- The phone can be switched back on after leaving the academy site. Not before and not during any period of social time (break or lunch).
- Any student found using or known to have used their phone during the Academy day will have the phone confiscated and a 30 minute same day detention issued. Phones will be returned at 3:10, parents will be informed via SchoolComs.
- If the student is a repeat offender the academy can request a parent/carer to come in and collect the phone from the academy.
- Any refusal to hand a phone over to members of staff will result in an immediate internal suspension under the academy’s behaviour policy. This would constitute the refusal of a reasonable request by a member of staff.

3.2 Contacting Students and Parents/Carers

In non-urgent situations parents wishing to contact their child during the academy day should ring the academy. We have a well-established and efficient system for getting messages to students and pastoral support if it is needed.

Students who need to contact parents during the course of the academy day should speak to Student Reception or their Pastoral Head of Year, who will make a phone available.

3.3 Trips and Visits

At the academy we follow the guidance of the Department for Education with regards to the use of mobile phones on trips and visits. Educational visits are an extension of the school day and rules around mobile phones are still enforceable during these times.

The academy has the rule of **“Never used, seen or heard”**, students must not use a mobile device, smart watch or electronic device including headphones anywhere on the academy site or during an educational visit, except under the specific direction of a member of staff. The trip leader will

designate structured times during the trip when students are able to have their phones out and use them. At all other times, students are prohibited from using or having their mobile phones on show. Failure to adhere to this requirement will result in Parents being contacted and sanctions being given under the academy behavior policy including the removal of mobile devices.

3.4 Sanctions

The Department for Education (DfE) provides guidance on how schools can use sanctions lawfully in the Behaviour in Schools guidance. Schools can use a range of sanctions for breaching the mobile phone policy appropriate to their context, including confiscation and detentions. Schools have the power to confiscate mobile phones or similar devices as a disciplinary penalty. The law protects staff from liability in any proceedings brought against them for any loss or damage to items they have confiscated as a sanction, providing they have acted lawfully.

- If a phone is seen by a member of staff it will be confiscated by them - Schools are permitted to confiscate phones from students.
- Once confiscated this will be placed in student reception. The student will be issued with a 30 minute same day detention and where the student will be allowed to sign for and collect it their mobile phone at 3:10 from reception. Year 12 and 13 will collect their phone from the director of Sixth Form.
- If a student has their mobile phone repeatedly confiscated we will request a parent or carer collects it from main reception after 3:10.
- If we have reason to believe the phone contains pornographic images, or if it is being/has been used to commit an offence or cause personal injury, staff have the power to search or confiscate a students' phone, as set out in the [DfE's guidance on searching, screening and confiscation](#). This will always be done by a members of the senior leadership team or pastoral team.

Certain types of conduct, bullying or harassment can be classified as criminal conduct. The Academy takes such conduct extremely seriously, and will involve the police or other agencies as appropriate.

Such conduct includes, but is not limited to:

- Sexting
- Threats of violence or assault
- Abusive calls, emails, social media posts or texts directed at someone on the basis of someone's ethnicity, religious beliefs or sexual orientation

3.5 Searching students

The Principal, or staff they authorise, have a statutory power to search a student or their possessions where they have reasonable grounds to suspect that the student is in possession of a prohibited item as set out in legislation or any item identified in the academy rules as an item that may be searched for. Principals can (and should) identify mobile phones and similar devices as something that may be searched for in their behaviour policy.

3.6 Adaptions and reasonable adjustments

Whilst the academy prohibits the use of mobile phones throughout the academy day to reduce distraction and disruption, we must comply with duties such as the duty to make reasonable adjustments where necessary. There may be exceptional circumstances where we will consider making adaptations to the policy for specific students. This policy does not provide an exhaustive list of exceptional circumstances, the academy will assess each case on its own merits.

The academy has a duty under the Children and Families Act 2014 to have arrangements in place to support students with medical conditions. In some circumstances, supporting a student with their medical condition can involve the use of a mobile phone. For example, students with diabetes might use continuous glucose monitoring with a sensor linked to their mobile phone to monitor blood sugar levels. Where mobile phone use allows students to manage their medical condition effectively, it would not be reasonable for the academy to prevent this.

The academy will also allow flexibility in the policy for students who are young carers and need to contact home. Allowing flexibility for individual students does not mean that these students should be exempt from all restrictions on the use of their mobile phone. The academy has practices in place which enable students to use their mobile phone for a specific purpose at specific times and locations, for example in a Head of Year's office.

4. Use of mobile phones by staff

4.1 Personal mobile phones

Staff (including volunteers, contractors and anyone else otherwise involved/employed by the academy) are not permitted to use their mobile phones for personal use while students are present. Staff can use mobile phones around the academy site for academy business this includes but is not limited to class charts access. Staff can use mobile phones for other purposes in designated offices and staffrooms.

There may be other circumstances in which it's appropriate for a member of staff to have use of their phone during contact time. For instance:

- For emergency contact by their child, or their child's academy
- In the case of acutely ill dependents or family members

The Principal will decide on a case-by-basis whether to allow for special arrangements.

If special arrangements are not deemed necessary, academy staff can use the academy office number 01744 678859 as a point of emergency contact.

4.2 Safeguarding

Staff must refrain from giving their personal contact details to parents or students, including connecting through social media and messaging apps.

Staff must avoid publicising their contact details on any social media platform or website, to avoid unwanted contact by parents or students.

Similar details and guidance can be found in the E-Safety and Internet Email Use policy alongside the ICT Acceptable Use policy.

Staff must not use their mobile phones to take photographs or recordings of students, their work, or anything else which could identify a student. If it's necessary to take photos or recordings as part of a lesson/academy trip/activity, this must be done using academy equipment or to have prior approval by a member of the academy leadership team.

4.3 Further use of personal mobiles for work purposes

In some circumstances, it may be appropriate for staff to use personal mobile phones for work. Such circumstances may include, but aren't limited to:

- Emergency evacuations
- Supervising off-site trips
- Supervising residential visits

In these circumstances, staff will:

- Use their mobile phones in an appropriate and professional manner, in line with our staff code of conduct
- Not use their phones to take photographs or recordings of students, their work, or anything else which could identify a student

4.4 Work phones

Some members of staff are provided with a mobile phone by the academy for work purposes.

Only authorised staff are permitted to use academy phones, and access to the phone must not be provided to anyone without authorisation.

Staff must:

- Ensure that communication or conduct linked to the device is appropriate and professional at all times, in line with our staff code of conduct.

4.5 Sanctions

Staff that fail to adhere to this policy may face disciplinary action.

See the academy's staff disciplinary policy for more information.

5. Use of mobile phones by parents, volunteers and visitors

Parents/ carers, visitors and volunteers (including Trustees and contractors) must adhere to this policy as it relates to staff if they are on the academy site during the academy day.

This means:

- Not using mobile phones in areas of the academy where students are present
- Not taking pictures or recordings of students, unless it's a public event (such as an academy fair), or of their own child
- Using any photographs or recordings for personal use only, and not posting on social media without consent
- Not using phones in lessons, or when working with students

Parents, 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 academy.

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

6. Loss, theft or damage

Students bringing phones to academy must ensure that they are stored securely and out of sight.

Students must secure their phones as much as possible, including using passwords or pin codes to protect access to the phone's functions. Staff must also secure their personal phones, as well as any work phone provided to them. Failure by staff to do so could result in GDPR breaches.

Where a mobile phone is brought into the academy, it is entirely at the student's /visitors'/staffs' own risk. The Academy accepts no responsibility for the loss, theft or damage of any phone or electronic device brought into the academy. (Ref: Section 94, Education and Inspections Act 2006 states that "where a teacher disciplines a student by confiscating an item, neither the teacher nor the academy will be liable for any loss or damage to that item. Equally, there is no statutory liability on academy's for items that go missing in other ways.")

Confiscated phones will be stored in student reception in a secure location and must be signed out by the student or parent/carer upon return.

Lost phones should be returned to student reception. The academy will then attempt to contact the owner.

7. Trips and Visits

The academy needs to ensure that students' educational experience on a trip/visit is not disrupted by the presence of mobile phones. Therefore, the following paragraph will be included in all initial trip letters:

Mobile Phones

At the academy we follow the guidance of the Department for Education with regards to the use of mobile phones on trips and visits. Educational visits are an extension of the school day and rules around mobile phones are still enforceable during these times. These rules help us to keep students safe in our care. Mobile phones are not allowed to be used during educational visits unless designated by the trip leader at specific structured times. Such times may include: taking photographs during the trip, contacting parents. At all other times, students are prohibited from using their mobile phone. Failure to adhere to this requirement will result in sanctions under the academy behavior policy. Parents will be contacted and may be asked to collect their child from the trip/visit. The trip leaders have discretion on whether to designate “long travel journeys” as structured times to allow students access to mobile phones for listening to music and watching downloaded content.

On all residential visits, students will be required to hand in their mobile phones to the trip leader on arrival at the accommodation. The trip leader will store the mobile phones securely and students will have access to them at structured times as designated by the trip leader.

8. Monitoring and review

The academy is committed to ensuring that this policy has a positive impact of students’ education, behaviour and welfare. When reviewing the policy, the academy will consider:

- Relevant advice from the Department for Education, the local authority or other relevant organisations