




To inspire, enrich and nurture so each individual reaches their full potential

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The HCFS is a company limited by Guarantee Registration number 07648654

Mobile Phone and Smart Device Policy

February 2026

To be reviewed biennially in the Spring Term

Next Review: February 2028

History of Document

Issue No.	Date Issued	Prepared By	Approved By	Comments
Issue 1	February 2026	Victoria Hobson	Victoria Hobson	New policy to align with strengthened DfE guidance for mobile phones in schools

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1. Purpose and Scope

At Hatfield Community Free School (HCFS), we want a calm, focused, and safe environment. This policy sets clear expectations for mobile phones and smart devices for staff, pupils, visitors and volunteers. It supports our Behaviour, Safeguarding, Data Protection and Online Safety policies.

This policy operationalises the DfE's strengthened expectation for phone-free schools throughout the school day, and reflects Ofsted's stated approach to reviewing a school's mobile phone policy and its implementation from April 2026.

2. Legal Guidance and Context

- DfE non-statutory guidance: Mobile phones in schools (updated 19 Jan 2026)—all schools should be mobile-phone-free by default across the entire day.
- Ofsted: inspectors will discuss the policy, how it's communicated, and how consistently it's followed from 1 April 2026.
- Searching & confiscation: DfE guidance (updated July 2023).
- Statutory powers: Education and Inspections Act 2006 s.91 (discipline, confiscation) and s.94 (retention/disposal).
- Safeguarding: Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2025.
- Aligned to HCFS' Walking Home Contract.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

- All staff: model and enforce this policy consistently; challenge breaches; follow the confiscation and logging process.
- Senior leaders/DSL: oversee implementation, handle exceptions (SEND/medical/safeguarding), ensure proportional sanctions and safeguarding referrals where needed.
- Parents/carers: support the policy; do not contact pupils by personal phone during the school day.
- Pupils: follow the rules in section 5.

4. Staff use of personal phones (between 8:25am and 4:05pm)

- Staff (including supply, volunteers and contractors) may only use personal phones in designated staff-only areas: staffroom, meeting rooms, office spaces.
- No personal phone use where pupils are present (classrooms, corridors, playgrounds, halls) during school hours.
- No photos/video/audio of pupils on personal devices (use school equipment only).
- If an urgent personal situation requires access, speak to a senior leader; otherwise, use the school office number for emergency contact.
- Where multi-factor authentication (MFA) is needed for school systems, staff should complete MFA away from pupils and minimise any device exposure.
(These arrangements align with DfE expectations that staff don't use personal phones in front of pupils during the day.)

5. Pupil phones and smart devices

5.1 Who may bring a phone?

Only Year 5 and Year 6 pupils with an approved Walking Home Contract may bring a phone onto the school site. The signed contract functions as the permission for a phone on site and must include the phone make/serial/number, as set out in our Walking Contract Form.

5.2 When must phones be off?

Phones must be switched off before entering the school gates and remain off while on site. Pupils may switch them on only after they have exited the school gates at the end of the day.

5.3 Arrival and collection routine (Y5/Y6):

- On arrival, pupils place the powered-off phone in the labelled classroom phone box.
- The box is sent to the office for secure storage during the day.
- At home time, the office returns the box to class; teachers hand phones back to named pupils.
- Phones must remain off until pupils are beyond the school gates.

5.4 Smartwatches and other smart devices:

Smartwatches or wearables with connectivity, cameras or recording are treated as mobile phones and not permitted for pupils (unless part of a medical reasonable adjustment authorised by the SENCO/DSL—see section 6). This reflects DfE guidance which includes smart technology within the policy scope.

5.5 Clubs, trips and events:

- School-led clubs on site: the phone remains off and in the pupil's bag, or stored with staff if requested.
- School trips: phones are not required, they must be handed in at the start of the school day as per normal arrival and collection routine.
- Residential: phones are not required, they are not to be brought.

6. Exceptions and reasonable adjustments

The school will consider case-by-case exceptions (e.g., certain medical needs, SEND, safeguarding) with a brief written plan agreed by the DSL/SENCO and parent/carer. Any permitted device must only be used as explicitly outlined in the plan. This is in line with DfE guidance to allow exceptions while maintaining a phone-free default.

7. Breaches, confiscation and searching

If a pupil is seen with a phone/smart device during the school day, or uses it on site:

1. Staff instruct the pupil to switch off and hand over the device immediately;
2. The device is taken to the office and stored securely for collection after school by parents;
3. Parents are informed of the breach and recorded on the school system;
4. Repeated breaches may lead to loss of permission to bring a phone to school, plus sanctions in line with the Behaviour Policy;
5. Any safeguarding content or concern is escalated to the DSL.

Searching and confiscation: HCFS may search for, confiscate, retain and (where lawful) dispose of items in line with DfE guidance and EIA 2006 s.91 and s.94. Electronic devices may be examined, and data may be deleted in accordance with DfE advice where there is a good reason and it is lawful and proportionate to do so.

Reasonableness and proportionality: all actions will consider age, SEND/disability and any equality considerations; any concern that a child may be at risk will be addressed under KCSIE.

8. Loss, theft or damage

Phones are brought to school at the owner's risk. The school does not accept responsibility for loss, theft or damage on school premises. Confiscated phones are stored securely and returned according to this policy.

9. Parents/carers, volunteers and visitors

- Do not use phones in areas where pupils are present. If use is essential, please go to the school office or a designated staff area.
- Do not take photos/videos of pupils (other than your own child at public events and for personal use only).
- If you need to contact your child during the day, call the school office—please do not ring your child's personal phone.

9.1 Video calls, filming and recording on site:

- Parents/carers must not make or receive video calls while on the school site (including playgrounds, pathways, and entrances).
- This includes turning the camera to show your own child.
- While doing so, other children may be captured in the background, which is not permitted for safeguarding and data protection reasons.
- If a parent needs to take a video call urgently, they must step off site where no pupils are present.
- Staff will politely challenge any parent using a device in a way that may view/record children, and may request that the viewing/recording stops immediately.
- Persistent breaches may result in the parent being asked to meet with the Principal to review expectations.

10. Communication, training and monitoring

- The policy will be explained to staff, pupils and parents/carers; signage placed at entry points; Y5/6 staff briefed on routines.
- Implementation and breaches will be monitored and reported termly to leaders/trustees; the policy will be reviewed biennially or in light of new guidance/inspections.

11. Linked school documents

Behaviour Policy; Safeguarding & Child Protection; Staff Code of Conduct; Data Protection/Acceptable Use; Educational Visits; Online Safety; Walking Home Contract (Y5/Y6).