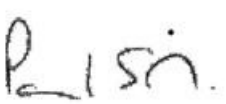
The Black Pear Trust

USE OF PERSONAL TECHNOLOGY POLICY (STAFF, PUPILS/STUDENTS AND VISITORS) (2026–27)

APPROVED BY:	Trust Board	**DATE: 16/07/2026**
LAST REVIEWED ON:	16th July 2026	
NEXT REVIEW DUE BY:	July 2026	
SIGNED		

SUMMARY OF UPDATES FOR TRUSTEES (2026–27)

- Clarified the Trust-wide minimum standard for a phone-free environment: pupils/students must not access or use personal devices at any point during the school day (including break and lunch), while allowing headteachers to choose a local delivery model (prohibited model or secure storage model).
- Strengthened the secure storage model wording so devices are switched off on arrival, stored securely for the full day, remain out of sight, and "seen/heard/used" is treated as a breach.
- Added an explicit reasonable adjustments clause (e.g. disability/SEND): any adjustment must be documented and risk assessed as appropriate, and must preserve a phone-free environment as far as possible.
- Tightened "educational use" to be exceptional (not routine), pre-authorised, supervised, time-limited, and only where a school device is not available; prohibited recording/messaging/social media beyond the specific activity.
- Strengthened communication expectations (website/admissions materials, assemblies/signage, clear rationale) and clarified that parents/carers should contact pupils/students during the school day via the school office, not via pupils'/students' personal devices.
- Defined the "school day" for clarity and consistent enforcement (includes arrival/dismissal, lessons, breaks, transitions, supervised study, detentions, exams, and school-run clubs/breakfast/after-school provision).
- Strengthened staff professional boundaries: staff must not use personal phones, personal email, or personal messaging/social media apps (e.g. WhatsApp) to communicate with pupils/students or parents/carers; school-issued devices/systems only.
- Added a Trust-wide clause on security, loss and damage: pupils/students are discouraged from bringing valuable devices; devices are brought at the pupil/parent's own risk (with a limited exception where a device is formally handed to staff and loss/damage is due to negligence).
- Expanded enforcement wording: clearer expectations for confiscation, secure storage and return arrangements (including escalation for repeat breaches), refusal to hand over as a behaviour matter, and searching in line with the Searching, Screening and Confiscation policy.
- Added safeguarding handling for device content: where content raises a safeguarding concern, staff should not routinely view/copy/share; the DSL determines next steps and referrals where required.
- Strengthened monitoring for assurance: Trust/schools will monitor implementation for consistency and consider impact using behaviour and safeguarding trends, attendance/punctuality issues linked to device use, and stakeholder feedback on focus and wellbeing.
- Added a Post-16 addendum for Woodrush High School: maintains the Trust's phone-free expectation for Years 7–11 while setting sixth form expectations and allowing any limited sixth-form device use only in clearly designated sixth-form areas/times, without undermining the wider phone-free culture.

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1. PURPOSE AND PRINCIPLES

Black Pear Trust is committed to maintaining calm, safe and focused environments where teaching and learning can take place without disruption.

In line with Department for Education (DfE) guidance, schools are expected to operate as mobile phone-free environments by default, with any use being exceptional and clearly justified.

This policy applies to all personal technology, including:

- Mobile phones
- Smart watches
- Smart glasses
- Earbuds and wearable technology
- Any device with communication, internet or recording capability

The policy ensures:

- Robust safeguarding and child protection
- High standards of behaviour and conduct
- Appropriate professional boundaries
- Compliance with data protection

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to:

- All pupils/students
- All staff (teaching, support, supply)
- Volunteers
- Trustees and governors
- Contractors and visitors

It applies at all times:

- During the school day (including lessons, breaks and transitions)
- On school premises
- During educational visits and off-site activities

For the purposes of this policy, the "school day" includes arrival and dismissal times, form/tutor time, lessons, break and lunch, movement between lessons, supervised study periods, detentions, examinations, and all school-run provision on site (including breakfast club and after-school clubs). Where pupils/students attend off-site provision as part of the school day, the same expectations apply unless a specific risk assessment states otherwise.

3. LINKS TO OTHER POLICIES

This policy should be read alongside:

- Behaviour Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Online Safety / Acceptable Use Agreement
- Data Protection Policy
- Searching, Screening and Confiscation Policy
- EYFS Policy (where in place)

4. CORE EXPECTATION: PHONE-FREE ENVIRONMENT

All Black Pear Trust schools operate as mobile phone-free environments throughout the school day.

This means:

- No routine use of personal devices by staff or pupils/students
- Devices are not visible, audible, or in use in the presence of pupils/students
- Any use is exceptional, authorised, and justified

DfE guidance makes clear that restrictions apply to all smart technology with similar functionality, not just phones.

5. EXPECTATIONS FOR PUPILS/STUDENTS

5.1 POSSESSION AND STORAGE

Each Black Pear Trust school must operate a phone-free environment. Headteachers may choose how this is implemented locally (e.g. prohibited model or secure storage model), but the Trust-wide minimum standard is that pupils/students must not access or use personal devices at any point during the school day, including at break and lunch.

- Prohibited model: phones and smart devices are not brought onto site (unless agreed as a reasonable adjustment or for an approved medical need).
  or
- Secure storage model: if a device is brought to school, it must be switched off on arrival and stored securely for the full school day (e.g. in a locked locker, secured pouch, or collected and held by staff).
    - Devices must remain out of sight and not be accessed during the school day.
    - If a device is seen, heard or used, it will be treated as a breach of this policy.

Devices must not be accessed during the school day.

Reasonable adjustments may be agreed for individual pupils/students (for example, to support a disability/SEND or other identified need). Any agreed adjustment must be documented, risk assessed where appropriate, and designed to preserve a phone-free environment as far as possible.

5.2 USE OF DEVICES

Pupils/students must not:

- Use mobile phones or smart devices during the school day
- Send messages, make calls or access the internet
- Take photos, videos or audio recordings
- Use devices in toilets, changing areas or private spaces

5.3 EDUCATIONAL USE

Personal devices should not be used as part of routine teaching and learning during the school day, on the school premises. Any educational use must be exceptional, clearly justified, time-limited, and only permitted where a school device is not available and the activity cannot reasonably be delivered without it.

- When explicitly authorised in advance by a teacher (or senior leader) for a specific task
- Under direct supervision (with staff able to see the screen at all times)
- For a clearly defined, time-limited period, after which the device is switched off and returned to storage
- With no photographing, filming, audio recording, messaging, social media, or internet browsing beyond the specific activity

6. EXPECTATIONS FOR STAFF

6.1 DURING THE SCHOOL DAY

Personal devices must:

- Be switched off or set to silent
- Be stored securely out of sight (e.g. bag, locker, staff area)

Staff must not use personal devices in the presence of pupils, except in emergencies.

6.2 PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

Staff must:

- Model appropriate behaviour at all times
- Not make or receive personal calls/messages during contact time
- Use designated staff areas for personal phone use

6.3 SMART TECHNOLOGY

- Smart watches and similar devices must not be worn during teaching or supervision

- These devices must not be used for communication, recording or internet access

7. SAFEGUARDING AND DATA PROTECTION

To protect pupils/students and staff:

- Personal devices must never be used to:
  - Photograph or record pupils/students
  - Store or transfer pupil information
- Only school-issued devices may be used for:
  - Educational recording
  - Communication with parents
  - Storage of pupil data

Staff must not use personal phones, personal email accounts, or personal messaging/social media apps (e.g. WhatsApp) to communicate with pupils/students or parents/carers. Where a role requires mobile communication for work purposes, a school-issued device and approved school systems must be used, in line with the Staff Code of Conduct and Data Protection Policy.

KCSIE requires schools to maintain strong oversight of digital safeguarding and technology use across the school community.

8. EYFS REQUIREMENTS

In EYFS settings:

- Staff must not carry or use personal mobile devices in areas where children are present
- Smart watches and similar devices must not be worn during contact time
- Devices must be stored securely away from children

These controls reflect statutory safeguarding requirements for early years environments.

9. VISITORS, VOLUNTEERS AND CONTRACTORS

All visitors must:

- Follow the same expectations as staff
- Not use personal devices in areas where pupils/students are present

Schools will:

- Provide clear signage
- Communicate expectations on arrival

Staff must challenge any inappropriate use.

10. EMERGENCIES AND EXCEPTIONAL USE

Personal devices may be used where:

- There is a genuine emergency
- No school device is immediately available

In such cases:

- Staff should, where possible, move away from pupils/students
- SLT should be informed as soon as practicable

EDUCATIONAL VISITS

- School devices are the default
- Personal devices only used where necessary and authorised

CRITICAL INCIDENTS

Use may be permitted where directed by emergency procedures or senior leaders.

11. MEDICAL NEEDS

Where a device is required for medical reasons:

- This must be detailed in an Individual Healthcare Plan
- Use must be limited strictly to the required function
- All other functions must remain unused

12. TRAVEL TO AND FROM SCHOOL (PUPILS)

Where pupils/students carry devices for safety:

- Devices must be switched off and out of sight on arrival
- They must not be used on school premises

12A. SECURITY, LOSS AND DAMAGE (PUPILS'/STUDENTS' PERSONAL DEVICES)

Pupils/students are discouraged from bringing valuable personal devices to school. Where a pupil brings a device onto site (including under the secure storage model), it is brought at the pupil's/parent's own risk. The Trust and its schools do not accept responsibility for loss, theft or damage to personal devices, except where the device has been formally handed to staff for secure keeping and loss/damage is due to negligence.

13. SEARCHING, CONFISCATION AND ENFORCEMENT

13.1 PUPILS/STUDENTS

- If a device is seen, heard or used in breach of this policy, staff may require the pupil to hand it over and may confiscate it in line with the school's Behaviour Policy.
- Confiscated devices will be labelled and stored securely. The school will determine when/how the device is returned (e.g. end of day, or collected by a parent/carer), and this may escalate for repeat breaches.
- If a pupil refuses to hand over a device, this will be treated as a behaviour incident and dealt with in line with the Behaviour Policy. The school may contact parents/carers and, where appropriate, apply further sanctions.
- Searches may take place where there is reasonable suspicion of risk or serious breach, and will be conducted in line with the school's Searching, Screening and Confiscation Policy, taking account of safeguarding and staff training requirements.
- Where there is a safeguarding concern about content (e.g. indecent images, threats, bullying or exploitation), staff will not routinely view, copy or share content. The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will be informed immediately and will determine next steps in line with safeguarding procedures, including referral to external agencies where required.

13.2 STAFF

- Breaches will be addressed through line management and disciplinary procedures

14. BEHAVIOUR AND SANCTIONS

Breaches will be addressed proportionately.

Pupils/students may face:

- Warning or reminder
- Confiscation
- Behaviour sanctions
- Loss of privilege to bring a device
- Parental involvement
- Safeguarding referral
- Suspension (for serious breaches)

Staff may face:

- Informal or formal management action
- Safeguarding investigation
- Disciplinary procedures

Serious breaches (e.g. recording, sharing images) may be treated as gross misconduct.

15. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

ALL INDIVIDUALS

- Follow this policy at all times
- Support a phone-free environment

STAFF

- Enforce expectations consistently
- Challenge breaches promptly

SENIOR LEADERS

- Ensure clear communication
- Monitor consistent implementation
- Address non-compliance

Ofsted evaluates how consistently mobile phone policies are understood and applied across schools.

16. COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS AND COMMUNITY

Schools will ensure this policy is understood and applied consistently by communicating it clearly to pupils, staff, parents/carers and visitors.

- Publish the policy on the school website and include key expectations in admissions information and the home-school agreement (where used)
- Reinforce expectations through assemblies, tutor time, signage, and reminders at key transition points (e.g. start of year, new intake)
- Explain the rationale for a phone-free environment (safeguarding, focus, behaviour and wellbeing)
- Make clear that parents/carers should contact pupils/students during the school day via the school office, not via pupils'/ students' personal devices
- Support families to reinforce expectations before and after school (e.g. switching off on arrival, safe travel use only)

17. MONITORING AND REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed annually and when national guidance changes. The Trust will also monitor implementation across schools to ensure expectations are applied consistently and effectively.

- DfE Mobile Phones in Schools Guidance (2026)
- Behaviour in Schools Guidance
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)
- EYFS Statutory Framework
- Staff induction and periodic reminders/training on expectations and enforcement
- Monitoring of behaviour incidents and safeguarding concerns linked to personal devices

- Periodic checks/audits (e.g. pupil/student voice, staff feedback, hotspot locations, repeat breaches) to inform improvement

Schools will consider the impact of this policy through trends in behaviour, safeguarding/online safety concerns, attendance/punctuality issues linked to device use, and pupil/student, staff and parent/carer feedback about focus and wellbeing.

18. POST-16 (SIXTH FORM) ADDENDUM – WOODRUSH HIGH SCHOOL

This addendum applies to Woodrush High School's sixth form provision. It is intended to recognise the increased independence of post-16 students while maintaining a calm, safe and focused environment and protecting the phone-free expectations for pupils/students in Years 7–11.

- Years 7–11 remain phone-free throughout the school day, in line with this Trust policy.
- Sixth form students must not use personal devices in teaching rooms, supervised study sessions, assemblies, or when moving around the main school site where younger pupils/students are present, unless a member of staff authorises exceptional use.
- If sixth form use is permitted by the school, it must be limited to clearly designated sixth form-only areas and/or specified times (e.g. sixth form common room at break/lunch), and must not undermine the phone-free culture for younger pupils. Local arrangements must be communicated clearly to students, staff and parents/carers.
- All safeguarding, privacy and data protection expectations in sections 7 and 14 apply equally to sixth form students. In particular, photographing/filming/recording others without permission is prohibited and may trigger safeguarding action.
- Any misuse (including cyberbullying, harassment, sharing images, or creating disruption) will be addressed through the Behaviour Policy and may result in removal of permission to use devices on site and/or other sanctions.