

West Monmouth School



Mobile Phone and Digital Devices Policy

“From Gate to Gate”

Date of Policy Approval: 12th November 2024

Date of Policy Review: November 2026

Introduction and Aims:

West Monmouth School recognises that communication through mobile technologies has become an accepted part of everyday life for both students in school and adults. We recognise that mobile phones, particularly smart phones, are an important part of everyday life for our students, parents and staff, as well as the wider community.

This policy outlines the acceptable use of mobile devices in West Monmouth School in the context of safeguarding, and underpinned by our core values. At West Monmouth School, students are prohibited from having mobile phones and devices in school for the reasons outlined below:

- They are the primary source of low-level disruption in lessons
- Students calling parents to pick them up if they feel ill, without any contact through wellbeing team or main office.
- Staff having photos/videos taken without consent and used inappropriately on social media.
- Persistent safeguarding issues and concerns, including the use of phones to arrange 'meet ups' during lesson times.
- Increasing cases of cyber bullying using mobile phones.
- The overwhelming link between excessive mobile phone /social media use and poor mental health.

At West Monmouth School we recognise the vulnerability of our students and the potential for exploitation and abuse through the inappropriate use of mobile phones and devices. We take steps to ensure that our safeguarding procedures are all-encompassing and robust.

This policy aims to:

- Ensure that there is a shared understanding of and adherence to the policy by all stakeholders and visitors.
- Raise the awareness of all staff (including students on placement, volunteers and those from Supply Agencies) of their responsibility for safeguarding in all areas of school life.
- Secure an environment in which students and staff (and their families) are protected from the risk of images being recorded and used/stored for inappropriate purposes.
- Protect and improve the mental health of our community.

Roles and responsibilities

Staff:

All staff (including teachers, support staff, and supply staff) are responsible for enforcing this policy.

Volunteers, or anyone else otherwise engaged by the school, must alert a member of staff if they witness, or are aware of, a breach of this policy.

The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) are responsible for monitoring the policy every 2 years, reviewing it, and holding staff and children accountable for its implementation.

The school understand that students need access to timetables and organisational tools and will ensure all students are provided with these.

Students:

All students are responsible, as members of the West Monmouth School community for safeguarding each other and improving their educational experiences by adhering to this policy.

Use of mobile phones and digital devices by students:

Student use:

The school 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. West Monmouth School supports this approach wholeheartedly. To that end, the school has adopted the following mobile phone best use policy:

- Students are allowed to bring mobile phones to and from school to ensure their personal safety on route to and from school;
- Students **must not use or be seen with a mobile device (including headphones) anywhere in school during the school day**. For the purposes of this policy, 'on school grounds' happens as soon as students enter the school gates.
- A smart watch may be used as watch but will be considered a digital device if used as anything other than this. A student found using a smart watch for purposes other than telling the time will be sanctioned as per the guidance for digital devices;
- If a student brings their phone to the school then, **before arrival at the gates, it should be switched off and kept out of sight and must be in a bag and not pockets**. It should not be seen or heard (including vibrate) throughout the school day;
- The phone can be switched back on once students have left the school site and are outside of the gates. Mobile phones cannot be seen or used in any period of social time (break or lunch);
- Devices such as headphones are never required in school time for the purposes of education as school will provide headphones when needed. It is therefore strongly advised that students do not bring these items to school.

Designated areas and exemptions (for students with medical needs):

The Headteacher reserves the right to allow phones and/or digital devices in selected areas given individual circumstances such as medical grounds eg. the use of a mobile phone to monitor insulin levels. A letter with supporting medical evidence will need to be sent into the pastoral year team in order for arrangements to be made.

Contacting Students and Parents/Carers:

Parents who urgently need to contact their child during the school day should ring the school. We have a system for getting urgent messages to children if required. A member of staff is on duty every lesson and will help with the communication of **urgent messages**.

Students who need to urgently contact parents during the course of the school day should speak to a member of the pastoral support team in the upper and lower school offices.

Sanctions:

Students found with mobile devices:

Students who infringe the rules set out by this document will face having their phones / devices confiscated. This will be at the discretion of the member of staff and phones **must be handed over when requested. Schools are permitted to confiscate phones from children under sections 91 and 94 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.**

- For the **first** offence, the mobile phone will be confiscated by the staff member and taken to Ready to Learn where it will be stored securely. The student will then be able to collect their phone from Ready to Learn after 3.00 pm and a record of the incident will be made.
- For a **second** infringement, the phone will be confiscated by the staff member and taken to Ready to Learn where it will be stored securely. **On this second occasion and any subsequent occasions, the phone can only be collected by the parent/carer of the student at the end of the school day between 3 – 4 or alternately the next day from front reception.** Please note that, after 4 o'clock, reception will not be manned and site and cleaning staff will not have access to the secure storage.
- Persistent infringements of this policy will result in further sanctions and pupils spending time in Ready to Learn.
- If we have reason to believe a phone contains inappropriate images, or if it is being/has been used to commit an offence or cause personal injury, staff have the power to search children's phones, as set out in the Welsh Government guidance on searching, screening and confiscation. This will always be done by a member of the SLT or pastoral team. Certain types of conduct involving phones being used for bullying or harassment are classified as criminal conduct and will be reported to the police. 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.

Use of mobile phones by staff

Personal mobile phones

Staff and visitors are not permitted to make or receive calls or send texts while children are present.

Use of personal mobile phones must be restricted to non-contact time, and to areas of the school where children are not present (such as empty classrooms, departmental offices and the staff room).

There may be circumstances in which it is 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 school
- In the case of acutely ill dependents or family members

- If the mobile phone is listed as a key contact method for the school (e.g PE staff teaching on fields a distance from the main building)

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

Safeguarding:

Staff must refrain from giving their personal contact details to parents or children, 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 children.

Similar details and guidance can be found in the E-Safety and ICT Acceptable Use Policy.

Work Phones:

Some members of staff may be provided with a mobile phone by the school for work purposes, for example on school trips.

Only authorised staff are permitted to use school 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.

Use of mobile phones by parents, volunteers and visitors

Parents, visitors and volunteers (including governors and contractors) must adhere to this policy as it relates to staff if they are on the school site during the school day. This means:

- Not taking pictures or recordings of children other than their own.
- Not using phones in lessons, or when working with children.

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 school.

Loss, theft or damage

Where a mobile phone or digital device is brought into school, it is entirely at the child's and parents' own risk. The school accepts no responsibility for the loss, theft or damage of any phone or electronic device brought into school. (Ref: Section 94, Education and Inspections Act 2006 states that "where a teacher disciplines a pupil by confiscating an item, neither the teacher nor the school will be liable for any loss or damage to that item").

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

Staff must secure their personal phones, as well as any work phone provided to them. Failure by staff to do so could result in GDPR breaches.

Monitoring and review

The school is committed to ensuring that this policy has a positive impact on children's education, behaviour and welfare. When reviewing the policy, the school will take into account relevant and up to date advice from the Welsh Government, the local authority or other relevant organisations.