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Anthem Schools Trust – Mobile Phones & Smart Technology Policy

Policy Purpose & DfE Alignment

Anthem Schools Trust is committed to ensuring **calm, safe, focused learning environments** across all settings. In line with the *DfE's statutory mobile phone guidance (updated 29 June 2026)* all Anthem schools operate as **mobile-phone-free environments by default; any exception must be explicitly approved and documented**.

This policy should be read alongside:

- *Behaviour in Schools (DfE, February 2024)* – especially expectations on consistency, proportionality of sanctions, and reasonable adjustments.
- *Searching, Screening and Confiscation (DfE, updated July 2023)* – defining legal powers for searches and confiscation.
- Ofsted's inspection expectations for mobile-phone policies from April 2026, including consistency, communication, and impact.

Safeguarding Rationale

Mobile phones and smart technology present recognised safeguarding risks, including but not limited to:

- exposure to harmful or age-inappropriate online content
- peer-on-peer abuse, including sexual harassment, image-based abuse and coercion
- online grooming, exploitation and criminal or sexual harm
- recording or sharing images, audio, or video without consent

This policy forms part of Anthem Schools Trust's wider safeguarding framework and reflects the principle that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. A mobile phone-free school day reduces opportunities for harm, supports early intervention, and strengthens protective supervision.

Any breach of this policy which raises safeguarding concerns will be managed in line with the school's Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy and reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead without delay.

Scope of Devices (All Schools)

This policy covers **all mobile devices and smart technologies**, including but not limited to:

- Mobile phones (smartphones, basic phones, feature phones)
- Smartwatches and fitness trackers with communication, notification, audio or recording capability
- Earbuds/headsets with Bluetooth/messaging/voice activation
- Any other portable communication, recording or smart-technology devices

Trust-wide principles (apply to all schools)

"Phone-free by default"

All Anthem schools:

- Prohibit the use of mobile phones and smart devices **throughout the school day**, including lessons, transitions, break, and lunch.
- Require that any permitted (e.g., medical need) presence of a device, not a smartphone, but a mobile phone with simple calling and text messaging capacity only, is **exceptional, risk-assessed and pre-approved** by school senior leaders.

Reasonable Adjustments (SEND, medical, disability, religious need, young carers)

Schools *must* consider individual needs under the Equality Act 2010 and DfE's behaviour guidance, recording decisions case-by-case. Common examples include:

- Diabetes technology requiring Bluetooth phone connection
- Young carers requiring emergency contact routing

All adjustments must be:

- formally risk-assessed
- agreed in writing by a senior leader
- time-limited where appropriate
- reviewed at least termly

Searching & Confiscation

All schools will follow the *Searching, Screening and Confiscation guidance (DfE, updated July 2023)*

Confiscated devices must be logged, stored securely, and returned according to the approved process.

Schools accept no responsibility for mobile phones that are lost, damaged or stolen on school premises or transport, during school visits or trips, or while students are travelling to and from school.

Communication & Consistency

Each school must demonstrate to Ofsted that:

- Students, staff, volunteers, and parents/carers **clearly understand** the policy
- It is **implemented consistently**

- Leaders **monitor impact** on behaviour and learning

Safeguarding Thresholds

Mobile phone misuse may constitute a safeguarding concern rather than a behaviour issue where it involves:

- sharing or accessing sexualised, harmful, or illegal content
- harassment, coercion, or intimidation
- recording or sharing images or audio without consent
- repeated or escalating incidents

In such cases, the Behaviour & Ethos Policy reminder system may be bypassed, and concerns will be managed in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

MAT-standard operational models

Each school must adopt *one* of three approved models but **keep consistent within the school**:

At St Marks Academy, we have adopted the model below:

Morning Hand-In Process

- **Hand in device** – During morning line up, students will hand their phones and they will be placed in their coaching boxes.
- **Students who are late**- Student hands their device to reception upon their arrival.
- **Log device** – Staff record the device and student details.
- **Store securely** – Device is placed in a secure, designated storage area.
- **Collect after school** – Student collects their device from their Coaches or relevant staff at the designated collection point at the end of the school day.
- **Detentions and Intervention** – Phones will be stored securely until the after-school event is complete and then be returned by the lead teacher.

Primary School Variant

Expectations

- Mobile phones or smart technology must not be brought to school, except with prior written approval (SEND/medical/exceptional).
- Approved devices must be handed in on arrival and stored securely.
- Devices must not be used, seen, or heard at any point.

Sanctions

- Device confiscated immediately.
- Parent/Carer contacted.
- If repeated, meeting with SLT and consideration of withdrawal of any previously granted exceptions.

Secondary School Variant (Years 7–11)

Student Requirements

- School operates a strict phone-free environment.
- The chosen operational model applies consistently.
- Devices must never be used, including for time-checking or calculator purposes.

St Marks Academy Sanction Framework (Secondary)

Where mobile phone misuse indicates potential safeguarding harm, sanctions may be applied alongside safeguarding processes and are not limited by the reminder system thresholds.

- **1st breach:** Device confiscated until the end of the school day and one day in our IEC.
- **2nd breach:** Device confiscated and must be collected by the parent/carer. The student will be in the IEC.
- **3rd breach:** Device confiscated for a minimum of five school days and the students will be sanctioned in line with St Marks Academy behaviour policy for repeated failure to follow Academy expectations. A formal meeting with parent/carer and a senior leader will be held.
- **Refusal to hand over device:** Device confiscated and behaviour treated as a serious breach of Behaviour & Ethos Policy. Further sanctions to be applied with suspension considered where appropriate.

Searching & Safeguarding

If there is reasonable belief a device contains harmful/illegal material (sexting, upskirting, harassment, threats), a search may be undertaken by authorised staff and police may be contacted.

Searches will only be conducted by authorised staff and in accordance with statutory guidance. Where a device is believed to contain safeguarding or criminal material, staff will not view content unless directed by the police or safeguarding partners. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will determine next steps, including referral to external agencies where appropriate.

Any incident involving the sharing of nudes or semi-nudes will be managed in accordance with the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and national guidance and must not be investigated internally beyond what is permitted.

Sixth-form Variant (If applicable)

Anthem Schools Trust recognises that sixth-form education represents a stage of increased independence and personal responsibility. In line with DfE's guidance, schools may consider limited and controlled access to mobile phones for sixth-form students, where this can be achieved without compromising the school's mobile phone-free culture for younger students.

Any sixth-form exception must be justified, clearly defined, tightly contained, and consistently enforced. Sixth-form students remain subject to the school's Behaviour& Ethos Policy at all times, and misuse of mobile phones will result in sanctions.

Sixth-form students may be granted limited mobile phone access **only where all of the following conditions apply**:

- Mobile phones may be used **only** in designated sixth-form areas (e.g. sixth-form common room or study centre)
- Mobile phones must **not** be used anywhere else on site
- Mobile phones must **never** be used in the presence of younger students
- Mobile phones must be out of sight and switched off when sixth-form students move through shared spaces

Any misuse of a mobile phone by a sixth-form student will result in the immediate removal of this privilege and reversion to the Years 7–11 mobile phone rules, alongside behaviour sanctions as appropriate.

Sixth-form students must sign a **Sixth-form Acceptable Use Agreement (Appendix 1)**

Leaders will regularly monitor sixth-form mobile phone use to ensure this exception does not undermine behaviour expectations, safeguarding arrangements, or the culture of the wider school. Evidence of implementation and impact will be available for inspection.

Where sixth-form mobile phone use is permitted, leaders will be able to clearly articulate the rationale for this decision and demonstrate that it is applied consistently and effectively.

Staff Requirements

Staff must not use personal mobile phones in the presence of students except where authorised. Staff must never use personal devices to photograph, record, or communicate with students. These expectations form part of safer working practice and reduce the risk of allegations or safeguarding concerns.

Staff must not use their personal mobile phones to process personal data, or any other confidential school information, including entering such data into generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools,

Staff must not give their personal contact details to parents/carers 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/carers or students.

Work phones

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

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

Staff must:

- Only use phone functions for work purposes, including making/receiving calls, sending/receiving emails or other communications, or using the internet
- Ensure that communication or conduct linked to the device is appropriate and professional at all times, in line with our staff Code of Conduct

Parents/Carers, Volunteers & Visitors

Parents/carers, volunteers, and visitors must adhere to this policy, and they cannot use their phones

where students are present if they are on the school site during the school day. This means:

- Not taking pictures or recordings of students, unless it is at a public event (such as a school 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/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 school.

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

- Use their phone to contact other parents/carers
- Take photos or recordings of students, their work, or anything else that could identify a student

Parents/carers or volunteers supervising trips are also responsible for enforcing the school's policy for students using their phones but must refer any sanctions to a member of staff, as they do not have the power to search or confiscate devices.

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

Confiscation, Logging & Storage (All Schools)

- Devices must be logged via a standard form.
- Always stored in a **locked cabinet or safe**.
- Returned to the student/parent/carer as per the school model.
- Records retained for safeguarding and behaviour monitoring.

Where mobile phone misuse raises safeguarding concerns, incidents must be recorded on CPOMS using the appropriate safeguarding category. Repeated or serious incidents will be reviewed by the safeguarding team to identify patterns, escalation, or the need for further intervention.

Communication & Implementation Plan (Ofsted-ready)

Each school must demonstrate:

- Annual communication to parents/carers (September)
- Induction for new staff, volunteers, and students
- Visible signage at entry points
- Regular reminders in assemblies/tutor time
- Leaders conduct **behaviour walks** to monitor compliance
- Anthem Community Council (ACC) members receive termly behaviour reports including phone-related data

Review Cycle

- Reviewed every 2 years if there are no changes to the DfE guidance
- Mid-year update if DfE revises statutory or non-statutory guidance
- Shared across the MAT to ensure trust-wide consistency

Oversight & Impact

The trust will:

- receive termly data on phone-related incidents, confiscations and trends
- evaluate the impact of this policy on behaviour, safeguarding and learning
- challenge inconsistencies or patterns of concern

Evidence may include behaviour logs, safeguarding records, student voice, and staff feedback. This ensures continuous improvement and accountability.

Mobile phone policy compliance and related safeguarding data will be reviewed as part of safeguarding Deep Dives and reported through established Trust safeguarding governance structures.

Link to Other Policies

- Behaviour & Ethos Policy
- Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct