



**CORNFIELD  
SCHOOL**

# **Student Mobile Phone Policy**

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## **Introduction**

Technology has become embedded throughout society and has transformed the way we expect to engage with services and consume content. This is especially true for young people, where, according to an Ofcom survey in 2017, 46% of 5-15-year olds have their own smartphone, and 49% have their own tablet. At Cornfield School, we embrace the use of Educational Technology (EdTech) and we will help and support our students to navigate and make sense of the digital world around them.

At Cornfield, we believe our number one priority is the safety and happiness of every student. We have a legal obligation to keep students safe from harm and ensure we exercise our duty of care to teach students how to keep themselves safe. In September 2018 the updated statutory guidance for schools, Keeping Children Safe in Education, puts legal responsibility on schools to ensure we are actively supervising and monitoring what students are accessing online. This legal duty upon schools does not just relate to what students access in lessons on school computers, but also includes any content they might access whilst at school.

Mobile phones now include many additional functions such as an integrated camera, video recording capability, instant messaging, mobile office applications and mobile access to the internet.

These allow immediate access to email, searching for information on the internet and other functions such as access to social networking sites e.g. Facebook, twitter, snapchat and WhatsApp.

These functions can pose a risk to the maintenance of good discipline, the focus on learning and, crucially, the effective safeguarding of students in schools. This includes the risk of sophisticated bullying via social media platforms. In some cases, mobile phone use within secondary school environments has created serious student protection concerns. Bullying, intimidation and harassment are not new in society; however bullying using a mobile phone represents a significant challenge for schools to manage.

Current research has highlighted a significant increase in the number of issues to do with online abuse via mobile phone technology and social media. As a result, students' wellbeing and mental health is being affected by this abuse of mobile phone technology.

Online safety, social media and the safe use of mobile phones will be addressed with students in ICT and PSHE lessons.

We appreciate that there is a positive side to mobile phone technology and students often carry mobile phones so that they can contact parents before and after school or use them as a positive way to manage their school journey. Beyond this, there is no need for students to use their mobile phones in school.

This policy has been developed in consideration of:

- DFE 'Mobile phones in schools' - Guidance for schools on prohibiting the use of mobile phones throughout the school day (February 2024)

- Keeping Studentren Safe in Education 2023
- DFE guidance on Searching, Screening and Confiscation - Advice for Headteachers, School
- Staff and Governing Bodies (July 2022)
- Article 8 of the European Convention of Human Rights
- Education Act 1996

### **School Based Provision**

Mobile phones and electronic devices are banned from use on the school site. Any that have been brought to school must be placed into the relevant tutor group storage container upon entry to the school.

It is not acceptable for phones merely to be put on silent; they must be switched off.

- Any student who fails to turn their mobile phone off while on the school site will have their phone confiscated.
- Students should not need to use a mobile phone whilst on school premises. In exceptional circumstances if a student should need to make a phone call within the school grounds they can either:
  - ask a member of staff if they can use the school phone network
  - ask their key stage leader if they can switch their mobile phone on to make the call.

DFE Guidance is clear that schools should have a 'never used, seen or heard' approach to mobile phones and that the consequence for breaking this expectation is at the discretion of the school but that it should be "sufficient to act as an effective deterrent". For this reason, all confiscations will run until a parent/carer comes to collect the device from the headteacher, as this is reasonable, proportionate and provides an effective deterrent.

### **Off-Site Provision**

As part of the school's approach to learning in key stage 4, there are some times when students will be permitted to keep their mobile phones however, this will be controlled and sanctions for misuse will apply.

Students in key stage 4 (years 10 and 11) will be allowed to keep their mobile phones on their person for the purposes of keeping in contact with members of staff whilst attending college, work experience or travel training.

Students must adhere to the following rules;

- Must be kept on silent at all times
- Must be kept in a student's bag at all times
- Not place them on show or remove them from their bag until they have been directed by the member of staff
- No photos must be taken of other students or members of staff
- No videos must be taken of other students or members of staff
- No social media posts must be made whilst taking part in a school related activity or travel to and from such activity

- If any element of this policy is not adhered to staff are expected to confiscate the phone

As with the School Based Provision Sanctions, all confiscations will run until a parent/carer comes to collect the device from the headteacher, as this is reasonable, proportionate and provides an effective deterrent.

### **Compliance with the Policy**

It is required that all students are compliant with the expectations always outlined in this policy. To support this, School Leaders have the option to conduct a spot check of student belongings if there is sufficient evidence to do so.

There are no exceptions to this policy. If it is found that a student has used their's or another students mobile phone in school for any reason, they will be asked to hand their phone over for confiscation.

The DFE issued 'searching, screening and confiscation' guidance in 2022. This advice underpins the Cornfield School Mobile Phone Policy and supports our working practices.

Paragraph 57, Page 17 of the Searching, Screening and Confiscation guidance makes it clear that staff can search and confiscate any prohibited item, which in this instance includes a mobile phone.

Page 20 of the Searching, Screening and Confiscation guidance makes it clear that, consistent with Section 91 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, schools have the power to confiscate, retain or dispose of a pupil's property as a disciplinary measure where it is reasonable to do so. The fact that Cornfield School have identified a switched-on mobile phone to be a prohibited item means that the confiscation is both reasonable and lawful. As such, a member of staff is protected from any liability for loss or, or damage to, any item they have confiscated as long as they have acted lawfully.

### **The role of parents/carers**

Parents/carers have an important role in supporting the school's policy on prohibiting the use of mobile phones and should 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 student during the school day, they should be directed to the school office, where staff should be aware of the school's policy on relaying messages and facilitating contact. Where parents have questions or concerns, staff should address these in a timely manner and clearly communicate the reasons for prohibiting the use of mobile phones.

*(extract from DFE 'Mobile phones in schools' - Guidance for schools on prohibiting the use of mobile phones throughout the school day - February 2024)*

*Parents / Carers must not arrive directly to school in order to request that a confiscated phone is returned.*

## **Sanctions**

- Any student mobile phone, electronic device, earphones or headphones that are visible inside the school grounds between 8.45am and 3pm will be confiscated, placed in a storage container and securely locked away. If the mobile phone is not seen but it is evident that a student, however discretely, has used a mobile phone, or has not turned the phone off, the phone will be confiscated
- Once a phone is confiscated, it will not be returned under any circumstances until a parent/carers comes to school to collect it. This can be on the same day as the confiscation, as they is no time period to the confiscation.
- 'Headteachers are backed by the DfE to confiscate mobile phones and similar devices for the length of time they deem proportionate' (extract from DfE 'Mobile phones in schools' – Guidance for schools on prohibiting the use of mobile phones throughout the school day - February 2024).
- Confiscation until a parent/carer comes to school to collect is considered proportionate as the alternative of returning the phone to the student would be no different to the student having followed the school rules in the first place.
- If a student refuses to comply with any staff request for confiscation, they will be removed from lessons and placed on a 1:1 timetable. If they continue to refuse to hand over their phone for any reason, the circumstances will be reviewed, and the student may be sent home. Under these circumstances the student will also be banned from bringing their phone on to the school site.
- Any student banned from bringing a mobile phone on site will be subjected to occasional or regular searches in line with the Searching, Screening and Confiscation Guidance (2018). If a banned item is found, it will be confiscated.
- Any student failing to comply with the search may receive a suspension for persistent violation of school rules.

## **Smart Watches**

It is expected that Smart Watches, watches with functionality beyond just 'telling the time', are kept on 'flight mode' in school. If a student is suspected of using a smart watch during a lesson, they will be asked to show that it is in flight mode. If it is not, the watch will be confiscated. Similarly, they will be asked to confirm that their mobile phone is off. If the phone is not off, then the phone will also be confiscated.

## **Confiscating & Recording**

The confiscating member of staff should take the phone to the deputy head teachers office at the earliest opportunity where it will be kept safe. The negative action will be recorded using the school behaviour management system.