MOBILE PHONE AND PERSONAL COMMUNICATION DEVICES POLICY

2026–2027

Policy Owner	**Deputy Head (Pastoral)**
Responsible Officer	Deputy Head (Pastoral)
Approved by	Head and Governing Body
Applicable to	Whole College (Day and Boarding Students)
Last Reviewed	August 2026
Next Review	August 2027

1. Purpose

St Andrew's College recognises that mobile phones are an important means of communication for students, particularly within an international boarding community.

Students may need to communicate with parents and family members in different countries and time zones. Mobile phones may also provide useful accessibility and language-support functions, including translation applications.

At the same time, unrestricted mobile-phone use can cause distraction, interfere with learning, affect social interaction and create safeguarding and wellbeing risks.

The College therefore adopts a **controlled-use approach** which balances:

- effective teaching and learning;
- student welfare;
- safeguarding;
- appropriate digital behaviour;
- students' need to communicate with their families;
- the needs of international students;
- increasing independence and responsibility among students in Years 11–13.

This policy establishes when and where mobile phones and other personal communication devices may be possessed and used.

The policy reflects the Department for Education's statutory *Mobile phones in schools* guidance, which applies to independent schools from 1 September 2026. The DfE guidance specifically recognises the particular circumstances of boarding schools and

states that boarding schools should prohibit mobile-phone use throughout the teaching day while developing appropriate arrangements for the remainder of students' time at school.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- mobile phones;
- smartphones;
- smartwatches where they provide communication functions;
- other personal communication devices;
- devices capable of accessing mobile communications or the internet.

For simplicity, the term **"mobile phone"** is used throughout this policy to include these devices where appropriate.

The policy applies throughout the College, including:

- classrooms;
- corridors;
- communal areas;
- canteen;
- school grounds;
- boarding houses;
- educational visits and activities;
- off-site College activities.

3. Principles

The College's approach is based on the following principles:

1. Mobile phones must not interfere with teaching and learning.
2. Students must not use mobile phones during the teaching day except where an authorised exception applies.

3. Students may retain their phones, provided they comply with this policy.
4. Students must use phones appropriately and respectfully.
5. Boarders must have reasonable opportunities to communicate privately with their families.
6. The College recognises the particular needs of international students and different time zones.
7. Students in Years 11–13 are expected to develop increasing independence and responsibility in managing their devices.
8. Mobile-phone use must not compromise safeguarding, privacy or the wellbeing of others.
9. Phones must not be used to record, photograph or share images or information about others without appropriate permission.
10. The College will respond proportionately to breaches of this policy.

4. Mobile phones during the teaching day

The College's definition of the **teaching day** includes:

- lessons;
- movement between lessons;
- break;
- lunchtime;
- other scheduled teaching activities.

During the teaching day:

- students may have their mobile phone with them unless a specific College activity requires otherwise;
- the phone must be **switched off or on silent**;
- the phone must be **kept out of sight**;
- students must not use their phones;
- students must not check messages or notifications;
- students must not use headphones or earbuds connected to their phone;

- phones must not be used for social media, messaging, gaming, photography, recording or internet browsing.

This applies during lessons, between lessons, break and lunchtime.

This approach is intended to provide a **mobile-phone-free teaching environment**, while recognising that the College does not require students to surrender or permanently store their phones.

The DfE's statutory guidance expects schools to prohibit mobile-phone use throughout the school day, including lessons, between lessons, breaktimes and lunchtime.

5. Exceptions during the teaching day

There may be circumstances where a student needs to use a mobile phone during the teaching day.

This may include:

- a specific medical requirement;
- an accessibility or special educational need;
- an agreed individual arrangement;
- an emergency;
- a specific educational activity authorised by a member of staff;
- a requirement to use a translation application where alternative support is not reasonably available.

Where possible, students should obtain permission from the relevant member of staff before using their phone.

A student must not assume that because their phone has a particular function, they are automatically entitled to use it during the teaching day.

Where an ongoing need exists, the College may establish an agreed individual arrangement so that the student and staff are clear about when and how the phone may be used.

The DfE guidance recognises that individual exceptions may be necessary for medical, SEND or other specific needs.

6. Translation and language support

St Andrew's College is an international community and recognises that some students may require translation support.

Where a student needs to use a translation application:

- they should normally seek permission from the member of staff;
- use should be limited to the purpose required;
- the device should be put away immediately afterwards;
- staff should consider whether another translation method would be more appropriate.

A student's need for language support should not result in unrestricted mobile-phone use during lessons.

Where a student regularly requires translation assistance, the College should consider whether an agreed individual arrangement or alternative support would be more effective.

7. Mobile phones during free time

Outside the teaching day, students may use their mobile phones during designated free time.

Use should be:

- discreet;
- respectful;
- considerate of others;
- appropriate to the location;
- consistent with College expectations and safeguarding requirements.

Students should avoid using mobile phones in situations where doing so would be disruptive, intrusive or disrespectful.

The College recognises that boarders may need to use their phones to communicate with family members overseas, including at times that reflect different international time zones.

The DfE specifically recognises this need and states that boarding schools should facilitate arrangements allowing boarders to contact parents and families privately at a suitable time, taking account of relevant time zones for international pupils.

8. Mobile phone use in boarding

Mobile-phone arrangements in boarding recognise that the boarding environment is also the student's home during term time.

Students may use their mobile phones in boarding during permitted free time, subject to:

- house routines;
- consideration for other students;
- safeguarding requirements;
- reasonable quiet periods;
- curfew arrangements;
- any individual restrictions that apply to the student.

Students must not use phones in a manner that disturbs other boarders.

House Parents may establish reasonable house-specific expectations concerning:

- quiet periods;
- communal areas;
- study periods;
- bedtime;
- charging;
- use of phones after curfew.

House-specific arrangements must remain consistent with this policy.

9. Sixth-form students

The College recognises that students in Years 12 and 13 are approaching adulthood and should be supported to develop responsible use of technology.

The DfE's statutory guidance specifically states that schools should consider whether sixth-form students should have access to mobile phones at certain and limited times and locations, reflecting their increased independence and responsibility.

At St Andrew's:

- the teaching-day restrictions continue to apply;
- sixth-form students may have greater autonomy during permitted free time;
- sixth-form students remain subject to the same expectations regarding safeguarding, privacy, recording and appropriate online behaviour;
- additional freedoms do not permit phone use during lessons, break or lunchtime unless an authorised exception applies.

The College may provide additional flexibility for Year 12 and Year 13 students where this supports preparation for university, employment and adult life.

10. Family communication

The College recognises that regular communication with family is particularly important for international boarders.

Students will be permitted reasonable opportunities to contact parents, guardians and family members privately during permitted free time.

The College will seek to accommodate reasonable differences in international time zones.

Students should use appropriate private spaces where necessary to protect their own and their family's privacy.

Where a student needs to contact family urgently during the teaching day, they should inform an appropriate member of staff, who will facilitate appropriate communication.

Parents/guardians should not normally contact students during lessons.

Where an urgent family matter arises, parents/guardians should contact the College through the appropriate College communication channel.

11. Photography, recording and privacy

Students must not use mobile phones to:

- photograph or record another student without appropriate consent;

- photograph or record staff without appropriate permission;
- record lessons without permission;
- record sensitive or private conversations;
- photograph medical incidents;
- photograph students in changing rooms, bathrooms or other private areas;
- distribute images or recordings of others without appropriate permission.

Particular care must be taken with images or recordings involving students under 18.

The use of a mobile phone to record or distribute material may constitute a safeguarding or behavioural concern and will be managed under the **Safeguarding Policy** and/or **Behaviour Policy** where appropriate.

12. Online safety

Mobile phones provide access to online services and therefore fall within the College's wider online-safety arrangements.

Students must comply with:

- the **Online Safety Policy**;
- the **Behaviour Policy**;
- the **Acceptable Use arrangements**;
- the **Safeguarding Policy**.

Online behaviour which causes harm, harassment, bullying, intimidation, exploitation or other safeguarding concerns will be dealt with under the relevant College policies.

KCSIE 2026 requires online safety to be treated as a continuing and interconnected element of the College's safeguarding arrangements.

13. Mobile phones and assessments

Mobile phones must not be used during examinations or formal assessments except where specifically permitted as part of an approved access arrangement or assessment requirement.

Examination regulations and the instructions of the relevant examination board take precedence.

14. Educational visits and activities

Mobile-phone use during educational visits and activities will be determined by the responsible member of staff and the relevant risk assessment.

Students may be required to:

- keep phones switched off;
- keep phones out of sight;
- surrender phones temporarily;
- use phones only at designated times;
- carry phones for safety or communication purposes.

Where students are permitted to use phones during an off-site activity, they must continue to comply with this policy and the instructions of the responsible staff member.

Detailed arrangements are contained in the **Educational Visits Policy**.

15. Emergencies

In an emergency, students may use their mobile phone to seek help where doing so is necessary and appropriate.

Where a student becomes aware of an emergency, they should alert a member of staff or use the appropriate emergency contact arrangements.

The existence of this policy must not prevent a student from seeking urgent assistance.

Emergency and safeguarding arrangements take priority over normal mobile-phone restrictions.

16. Safeguarding

Mobile phones can present safeguarding risks, including:

- cyberbullying;
- harassment;
- sharing inappropriate images;

- exploitation;
- contact with unsafe individuals;
- coercion;
- grooming;
- online abuse;
- inappropriate recording;
- sexting or sharing sexual images;
- access to harmful content.

Where a mobile phone is involved in a safeguarding concern, the College's **Safeguarding Policy** must be followed.

Students should be encouraged to report concerns about mobile-phone use, online behaviour or content to a trusted member of staff.

17. Data protection and privacy

Students must respect the privacy and personal information of others.

They must not use mobile phones to obtain, store or distribute personal information about another person without appropriate justification and permission.

Staff must also comply with the College's data-protection requirements when dealing with students' devices or information.

18. Charging and storage

Students are responsible for keeping their own mobile phones secure.

Phones should normally be charged in accordance with boarding-house arrangements.

Charging devices must be used safely and must not create a fire or electrical hazard.

Students must not charge devices in ways that create a trip, fire or other safety risk.

The College may establish reasonable house-specific charging arrangements.

19. Breaches of the policy

A breach of this policy will normally be addressed through the **Behaviour Policy**.

The College will respond proportionately, taking account of:

- the nature of the breach;
- the student's age;
- the student's previous behaviour;
- whether the breach was deliberate;
- whether another person was affected;
- whether there is a safeguarding concern.

Possible responses may include:

- reminder or instruction to put the phone away;
- temporary confiscation;
- contact with parents/guardians;
- a behavioural consequence;
- restriction of phone access for a specified period;
- referral to a senior member of staff;
- safeguarding intervention where appropriate.

The College will not impose blanket restrictions that prevent a student from accessing necessary medical, safeguarding or other essential support.

20. Confiscation and retention

Where a student has used a mobile phone in breach of this policy, an authorised member of staff may require the student to hand over the device temporarily in accordance with the **Behaviour Policy**.

The College will:

- explain why the device is being confiscated where appropriate;
- record the confiscation where required;
- store the device securely;

- return it in accordance with the applicable behavioural consequence.

Staff must not routinely search the contents of a student's phone.

Where there is a safeguarding concern, staff must follow the **Safeguarding Policy** and relevant procedures.

21. Student responsibility

Students are expected to:

- understand this policy;
- keep their phone out of sight during the teaching day;
- follow staff instructions;
- use their phones responsibly;
- respect other people's privacy;
- use phones appropriately in boarding;
- comply with signing-in/house arrangements where applicable;
- report concerns about inappropriate phone use.

Students are responsible for the security of their own devices.

22. Parent and guardian responsibility

Parents/guardians are asked to support the College by:

- understanding the College's mobile-phone expectations;
- avoiding unnecessary contact with students during lessons;
- using the College's communication channels for urgent matters;
- supporting students to use mobile phones responsibly;
- recognising that international students may need reasonable opportunities to communicate across different time zones.

The College will communicate the policy clearly to parents/guardians and students.

23. Staff responsibilities

Staff are expected to:

- model appropriate use of mobile phones;
- enforce the policy consistently;
- avoid unnecessary personal phone use when supervising students;
- respond appropriately to breaches;
- recognise when mobile-phone use raises a safeguarding concern;
- follow the Safeguarding Policy where necessary.

Staff should not use personal devices to communicate with students except where specifically authorised under College procedures.

24. Monitoring and review

The College will monitor the effectiveness of this policy through:

- student feedback;
- staff feedback;
- behavioural incidents;
- safeguarding concerns;
- boarding feedback;
- parental feedback;
- relevant inspection or regulatory developments.

The policy will be reviewed annually or sooner where there are significant changes to legislation, statutory guidance or College arrangements.

25. Related policies

This policy should be read alongside:

- **Behaviour Policy**
- **Safeguarding Policy**
- **Online Safety Policy**

- **Boarding Policy / Boarding Handbook**
- **Supervision Policy**
- **Educational Visits Policy**
- **Data Protection Policy**
- **Acceptable Use arrangements**
- **Examinations Policy**

26. Review

Policy owner: Deputy Head (Pastoral)

Review date: August 2027