Fiveways School
Mobile Phone Policy

Policy Review

Review Cycle	Date of Current Policy	Author(s) of Current Policy	Review Date
Annual or more frequently if required	Sept 2026	Swavek Nowakiewicz	Sept 2027

Policy Ratification

Role	Name	Signature	Date
Chair of Governors	Malcolm Gulliver	Signed at meeting	25.09.26
Head Teacher	Swavek Nowakiewicz	Signed at meeting	25.09.26

Details of Policy Updates

Date	Details
Sept 26	New policy in line with the Department for Education, Mobile phones in schools, statutory guidance, updated 29 June 2026 https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mobile-phones-in-schools/mobile-phones-in-schools

This policy establishes a mobile phone-free school day by default. It applies to mobile phones and smart technology with comparable communication, notification, audio-recording or video-recording functions. It supports safeguarding, learning, privacy, dignity and consistent expectations while allowing individual adjustments required by law or a pupil's assessed needs.

Fiveways School context: Fiveways is a specialist Communication and Interaction school for pupils aged 4–19 with Severe Learning Disabilities (SLD) and Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities (PMLD). All pupils have an Education, Health and Care Plan. Many are non-speaking or use early intentional communication, and may also have physical, sensory, health, personal-care and regulation needs. This policy must therefore be implemented through individual assessment, Total Communication devices, and reasonable adjustments, without lowering safeguarding expectations.

1 Purpose and policy statement

Fiveways School prohibits pupils from accessing or using mobile phones and all smart devices throughout the school day, including lessons, transitions, breaktimes and lunchtimes. A pupil who brings a device to school must hand it to member of staff on arrival for secure storage. It will normally be returned when the pupil leaves the school site at the end of their day.

Exceptions are individual, purposeful, time-limited where appropriate and recorded. They may apply for disability, medical needs, communication, safeguarding, caring responsibilities or an agreed Sixth Form arrangement. An exception does not create unrestricted access.

This policy forms part of the school's behaviour arrangements and must be read with the school's safeguarding and child protection, online safety, acceptable use, data protection, staff code of conduct, medical needs, educational visits and complaints policies.

Please note: A high proportion of pupils at Fiveways School use technology, including iPads and other mobile devices, as communication aids. The school provides most of this equipment. However, some devices belong to individual pupils and travel between home and school.

Pupils may use their personal device when it supports their communication needs. The device's Wi-Fi and other functions not required for communication must be disabled while on the school premises. Pupils must not use personal devices to take photographs or make audio or video recordings.

Please see Section 6: Exemptions and Reasonable Adjustments.

2 Legal and statutory framework

The school has regard to the Department for Education statutory guidance mobile phones in schools, which became statutory on 29 June 2026 and applies from 1 September 2026. The guidance requires schools to prohibit pupil use throughout the school day by default and to make exceptions only where justified.

The policy also reflects the following legislation and guidance:

- Education and Inspections Act 2006, including the duty to promote good behaviour and the power to discipline pupils.
- Education Act 1996, including statutory powers relating to searches and prohibited items.
- The Schools (Specification and Disposal of Articles) Regulations 2012.
- Equality Act 2010, including the duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils.
- Children and Families Act 2014 and Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions.
- Behaviour in schools: advice for headteachers and school staff.

- Searching, screening and confiscation: guidance for schools.
- Keeping children safe in education 2026.
- UK General Data Protection Regulation and Data Protection Act 2018.
- Human Rights Act 1998, including respect for private and family life.
- Voyeurism (Offences) Act 2019 and relevant criminal law concerning indecent images, harassment, threats and malicious communications.

This policy is not a substitute for applying the law, statutory safeguarding procedures or professional judgement to the facts of an individual case.

3 Scope and definitions

This policy applies to all pupils, including Sixth Form students, while on the school site, while educated off site under school arrangements, during school transport where the school has responsibility, and during educational visits or residential activities where the trip rules adopt this policy.

Covered devices include:

- mobile and satellite phones;
- smartwatches and wearable devices able to message, notify, call, connect to mobile networks or record;
- tablets, music players, cameras, glasses, earbuds or other personal technology with communication or recording functions;
- any accessory used to conceal, connect to or control a covered device.

School-owned devices issued for learning, communication, assessment, medical care or operational use are governed by school controls and the acceptable use policy. Approved augmentative and alternative communication equipment is not treated as a personal mobile phone, but its camera, messaging and network functions may be restricted through an individual plan.

For this policy, approved augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) includes low-tech and high-tech systems such as objects of reference, symbols, communication books and boards, switches, Voice Output Communication Aids (VOCAs), eye-gaze systems and communication applications on a school-managed or individually owned tablet. The communication function of an approved AAC device must remain available whenever required by the pupil's communication profile or EHCP; restrictions should target only unnecessary calling, messaging, camera, recording, social media, hotspot or unrestricted internet functions.

Staff must not assume that a pupil's limited speech, cognition, mobility or conventional response means that the pupil has no view about a device or incident. Staff will use the pupil's established communication system, known yes/no response, behaviour and body-language indicators, communication passport and the knowledge of familiar adults to support participation and decision-making.

4 Core rules for pupils

- Pupils must not access or use a device at any point during the school day unless an approved exception applies.
- A device brought to school must be switched off, not merely placed on silent or airplane mode, and handed to the nominated class staff member immediately on arrival.
- Devices must not be kept in clothing, bags, lockers, wheelchairs or personal equipment unless a written exception specifically permits this.
- Pupils must not photograph, film, record, livestream, call, message, post, share, hotspot, use social media, play games or access online content on a personal device at school.

- Pupils must not use another person's device, lend a device, conceal a device, use a second device or encourage another pupil to breach the policy.
- Headphones and earbuds linked to a personal device must remain stored with that device unless approved for a specific need.
- A pupil who needs to contact home must ask a member of staff. The school office or another agreed school route will support the contact.
- A pupil who needs to show staff evidence of an online concern must tell a trusted adult. Staff will arrange safe access to the device without asking the pupil to circulate the material.

5 Arrival storage and return

5.1 Routine procedure

- Parents should tell the class team in advance when a pupil will regularly bring a device.
- On arrival, the pupil or accompanying adult hands the switched-off device to the nominated staff member.
- Staff place it in the class or departmental secure storage arrangement. Where needed, staff use a labelled pouch or record receipt.
- The school does not require or record passcodes for routine storage.
- The device remains stored and inaccessible to the pupil throughout the school day, unless an approved exception authorises access.
- The nominated staff member returns the device directly to the pupil or agreed adult immediately before departure.
- Staff report any discrepancy, damage noticed at handover, or device not collected to a senior leader.

5.2 Property and liability

A device is brought to school at the owner's risk. Families should label and insure valuable items and should avoid sending expensive devices where they are not needed for travel. The school will take reasonable care of a device accepted into storage. This does not remove any legal rights or responsibilities where loss or damage results from the school's negligence or from a lawful confiscation.

6 Exceptions and reasonable adjustments

The Headteacher or delegated senior leader may approve an exception following an individual assessment. The school will involve the pupil, parent and relevant professionals as appropriate and will consider the pupil's communication method and capacity to understand the policy. An exception will record the purpose, device, permitted functions, time, place, supervision, storage, review date and response to misuse.

For pupils with PMLD or SLD, the assessment must distinguish between a personal phone used for communication and a dedicated AAC aid. Decisions should be informed by the EHCP, communication profile, individual healthcare plan, sensory or physical access needs, Learning Support Plan and relevant advice from the Communication and Interaction team, health professionals or therapists. The pupil's ability to operate settings independently must not be assumed; where necessary, an authorised adult may configure permitted functions and guided access on behalf of the pupil.

Possible basis	Examples of a controlled arrangement
Medical need	A phone linked to continuous glucose monitoring, or another clinically required application; access as set out in the individual healthcare plan.
Disability or SEND	Use as an aid for communication, regulation, orientation, hearing, vision or another assessed need, with non-required functions disabled where practicable.
Safeguarding	Short-term access agreed with the Designated Safeguarding Lead where this helps a pupil report harm or follow a safety plan.
Young carer or exceptional home circumstance	Access at a specified time and place through an agreed staff member.
Travel	The device is stored during school and returned before the pupil starts the journey home.
Sixth Form	Limited use at an agreed time and designated Sixth Form location, never in front of younger pupils, and subject to the behaviour policy.

The school will not approve an exception merely for convenience, routine parent contact, entertainment or unrestricted social access. It will use the least restrictive workable arrangement and will review it when needs, risks or circumstances change.

7 Sixth Form arrangements

Sixth Form students remain subject to the phone-free default. To support preparation for adulthood, the Headteacher may permit limited access in a designated Sixth Form area at specified times. Such permission will be communicated to students and families and may be individual or cohort based.

- Use must not take place during teaching, therapy, care, work experience, meals or transitions unless specifically authorised.
- Students must not use phones in front of younger pupils or permit younger pupils to access their device.
- Photography, recording, livestreaming and social media posting remain prohibited unless staff authorise a curriculum activity using a school-managed process.
- Misuse may lead to withdrawal of permission and the sanctions in this policy.
- Work experience and college placements may apply their own stricter rules.

8 Parents and carers

- Support the phone-free school day and where possible discuss the rules with their child in an accessible way.
- Contact the school office, not the pupil's personal phone, during the school day. Staff will relay urgent messages and support contact where appropriate.
- Do not ask or encourage a pupil to keep, check or use a phone during the school day.
- Tell the school about a disability, medical, safeguarding or family circumstance that may require an individual arrangement.
- Do not use a phone to photograph, film or record pupils on the school site unless the school has expressly authorised this.

- Report online incidents affecting pupils to the school and preserve evidence without forwarding harmful or illegal material.

9 Staff expectations

All staff must apply the policy consistently, calmly and in a way that reflects each pupil's age, SEND, communication and understanding.

Before intervening, staff should check whether a device is an agreed communication or medical aid and consult the pupil's plan or a familiar member of the class team. Any instruction must be given using the pupil's usual Total Communication approach, such as objects of reference, symbols, signs, aided language, visual sequencing, social stories, modelling and sufficient processing time.

- Staff must not use a personal phone or any smart device for personal reasons in front of pupils during the school day.
- Personal phones must be kept silent and out of sight in the staff member's agreed secure storage place. They may be used during authorised breaks in staff-only areas.
- Staff may use a phone for a legitimate work purpose authorised by the school, such as multi-factor authentication, emergency communication or an approved school system. Use must be brief and must protect personal data.
- Staff must not use personal devices to photograph, film, record or store information about pupils. Only school-approved equipment and systems may be used.
- Staff must never contact pupils through personal telephone numbers, personal messaging accounts or social media, except where an emergency procedure expressly authorises contact and a senior leader records it.
- Staff must model the policy and challenge breaches. They must not ignore use because a pupil appears calm or because the device has been provided by a parent.
- Staff must follow the child protection policy immediately if device use raises a concern about abuse, exploitation, bullying, harmful content, self-harm, criminal activity or a pupil at risk of harm.
- Agency staff, volunteers, contractors and visitors must follow the same privacy and recording rules. The staff member hosting them is responsible for explaining local arrangements.

10 Teaching **and curriculum**

Pupils will receive developmentally appropriate teaching about online safety, respectful communication, privacy, consent, digital footprints, bullying, harmful content, scams, grooming, exploitation and the effects of mobile phone use on attention, sleep and relationships. Teaching will use accessible communication, repetition, symbols, social stories and practical examples as appropriate.

For pupils working at early developmental levels, teaching will focus on personally meaningful safety skills: recognising who may use a device, making or refusing a choice, seeking help, tolerating handover and return routines, understanding that photographs and recordings affect other people, and using an approved device only for its agreed purpose. Learning will be practiced repeatedly across familiar routines and settings and evaluated through personalised outcomes rather than assumed age-related understanding.

Personal mobile phones will not be used as part of routine teaching. Where technology supports learning, staff will use school-owned or school-managed equipment subject to filtering, monitoring and acceptable use controls. A teacher must not create an informal exception simply because a phone could support an activity.

11 Breaches and proportionate responses

The school will respond to a breach under its behaviour policy. Staff will first make the situation safe, support the pupil to relinquish the device where this can be done safely, and consider the pupil's communication, cognition, sensory profile, disability and the function of the behaviour. A sanction will be lawful, reasonable and proportionate.

For many pupils with PMLD or SLD, apparent refusal, repeated activation, distress or difficulty relinquishing a device may arise from communication need, reliance on predictability, sensory regulation, limited understanding, motor difficulty or learned routine. Staff must use proactive and non-punitive strategies first, including a familiar adult, visual or object cues, a now-and-next sequence, an alternative communication method, reduced language, additional processing time and a planned transition to secure storage. Responses should teach safety and replacement skills and should be linked to the pupil's Learning Support Plan where appropriate.

Staff must not remove a device that is the pupil's only effective means of communication unless there is an immediate safety or safeguarding necessity. If temporary removal is unavoidable, staff must provide a functional alternative communication system without delay and record the reason, duration, support offered and arrangements for return.

Level	Examples	Possible response
Initial or low-level breach	Phone visible, audible or accessed without permission.	Reminder using the pupil's communication system; device secured; incident recorded where appropriate; parent informed if needed.
Repeated or deliberate breach	Concealment, refusal, repeated access or use after instruction.	Possible confiscation for a proportionate period; parent contact; review of behaviour or support plan; meeting and additional restriction.
Serious misuse	Recording others, bullying, threats, sexual content, sharing private information, livestreaming, attempting to bypass controls or suspected criminal conduct.	Secure device without examining content unless lawful and authorised; senior leader and DSL involvement; preserve evidence; risk assessment; parent contact when safe; possible police or children's social care referral; behaviour sanction.

The school will consider safeguarding and unmet need alongside discipline. A breach may indicate that a pupil is at risk of harm or requires pastoral, clinical, behavioural or family support. Staff will refer concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or deputy without delay.

12 Confiscation

Authorised staff may confiscate a mobile phone where the school rules have been breached. The length and conditions of confiscation will reflect the intended outcome, seriousness, risk, previous incidents, age, SEND and individual circumstances. The Headteacher may retain a device for a proportionate period.

- Staff should ask the pupil to switch off the device and hand it over. Staff must not use force solely to secure a device unless the legal test for reasonable force is met and school procedures are followed.

- The staff member records the pupil, device, date, time, reason, condition if relevant, storage location, decision-maker and return arrangement.
- The device is placed in secure storage with access restricted to authorised staff.
- The school will normally return a confiscated device to the pupil at the end of the day or to a parent where this is proportionate and communicated. Serious safeguarding or criminal concerns may require another lawful arrangement.
- A member of staff must not search digital content merely because the device has been confiscated. Examination of data requires a separate lawful basis and must follow section 14.
- Any allegation of loss or damage will be investigated and handled through the school's complaints or staff procedures as appropriate.

13 Searching pupils and possessions

The Headteacher and staff specifically authorised by the Headteacher may search a pupil or their possessions in accordance with current statutory guidance and the school's Behaviour and Physical Support Policy. A search for a mobile phone or covered smart device prohibited only by school rules may be conducted where there are reasonable grounds to suspect possession or concealment, but reasonable force must not be used solely to search for such an item. Searches must be necessary, proportionate and treated as a last resort after less intrusive options have been considered.

- Before a search, staff assess the need, grounds, location, pupil's age and SEND, safeguarding risks, communication support and any relevant trauma or medical needs.
- Staff seek cooperation first and explain the reason and process in an accessible way.
- A search of possessions is carried out in the pupil's presence and with another member of staff present, subject to the limited exceptions allowed by law and guidance.
- A search of a pupil follows the statutory safeguards concerning the authorised searcher, sex of the searcher, witness, location, extent of clothing and dignity.
- Staff record the search and inform parents in line with statutory guidance and school procedures.
- If there is a risk that evidence may be deleted, shared or cause immediate harm, staff contact a senior leader or DSL promptly and consider police advice.

14 Examining data and harmful or illegal content

Staff must not routinely unlock, browse or copy content from a confiscated device. The Headteacher or authorised staff may examine data or files only where permitted by law and current statutory guidance, and where doing so is necessary and proportionate. Staff should seek advice from the DSL, data protection lead or police where content may involve abuse, exploitation, indecent images, threats or another offence.

- Do not ask a pupil or adult to forward, print or share an indecent image of a child.
- Do not view suspected indecent imagery unless there is a clear and lawful reason under safeguarding guidance; report the concern immediately to the DSL.
- Preserve the device and record who has handled it. Avoid actions that could alter or erase evidence.
- Where there are reasonable grounds to suspect data has been, or could be, used to cause harm, disrupt teaching or break the law, authorised staff will follow the statutory rules on examining and, where permitted, deleting data.
- Police advice or handover may be required. Parents will be informed unless this could place a child at risk, prejudice an investigation or conflict with professional advice.

15 Safeguarding online incidents and child-on-child abuse

Mobile phone misuse may be a safeguarding matter even when it occurs outside school. The school may act where online behaviour affects pupils, staff, school discipline, safety or the orderly running of the school. This includes bullying, sexual harassment, sharing nude or semi-nude images, coercion, grooming, exploitation, hate incidents, impersonation, threats, location tracking and non-consensual recording.

Staff will follow the child protection policy, report concerns to the DSL, support affected pupils, consider the needs and risks of all children involved, and make referrals to children's social care or police where appropriate. The school will avoid victim-blaming and will provide communication support so that pupils with SEND can report concerns and understand actions taken.

16 Photography audio and video recording

No pupil, parent, visitor or staff member may use a personal device to photograph, film, audio-record or livestream pupils at school without express school authorisation. This protects privacy, dignity, safeguarding and personal data. School performances or events may have separate written arrangements communicated in advance.

Covert recording may breach school rules, privacy, data protection or criminal law. A person who believes recording is needed to report wrongdoing should speak to the Headteacher, DSL or Chair of Governors and use the relevant complaints, safeguarding or whistleblowing procedure.

17 Educational visits residential activities and transport

17.1 Visits and activities

The visit leader will state the device rules in the risk assessment and parent information. The default remains no pupil access during the school day. For activities outside normal hours or residential trips, the leader may prohibit phones, store them centrally or permit limited contact at agreed times and places. Decisions will consider safeguarding, sleep, group cohesion, photography, local risks, loss, charging and access to emergency communication.

17.2 Travel to and from school

A pupil may bring a phone for personal safety while travelling. It must be handed in on arrival and will be returned immediately before departure. On school-arranged transport, pupils must follow transport provider rules and must not photograph, record or disturb others. Where a pupil's travel plan requires phone access, the school will agree the arrangements with the family and, where relevant, the transport provider.

18 Emergencies lockdown and loss of service

Pupils must not use personal phones during an emergency unless a member of staff directs them to do so or an individual emergency plan requires it. Uncoordinated calls, messages or posts can increase risk, disclose locations and obstruct emergency communication. The school will communicate with families through its agreed emergency channels.

Staff may use an authorised personal or school device during an emergency where this supports the emergency plan. Personal data must be limited to what is necessary and any incident involving personal-device use must be reported to a senior leader.

19 Data protection and information security

- School information must not be stored on personal devices unless an approved system provides the necessary security and the school has authorised its use.

- Staff must use school-approved communication channels and must not add pupil or parent contact details to personal address books.
- A lost device that may contain school information or credentials must be reported immediately as a possible personal data breach.
- School Wi-Fi access, filtering and monitoring arrangements apply to authorised devices. Pupils must not use mobile data, hotspots or virtual private networks to bypass controls.
- Information obtained through an incident, confiscation or search will be recorded, accessed, shared and retained only for a lawful school purpose.

20 Roles and responsibilities

Role	Responsibilities
Governing Body	Approve and monitor the policy; check alignment with legal duties, safeguarding, behaviour and equality; hold leaders to account for consistent and fair implementation.
Headteacher	Set the school approach; authorise staff to search; approve exceptions; communicate expectations; oversee sanctions, training, records, complaints and annual review.
Designated Safeguarding Lead	Lead the response to safeguarding concerns; advise on evidence, referrals and parent contact; link the policy with child protection and online safety arrangements.
Senior leaders	Support consistent decisions; approve or review confiscations and exceptions; address serious or repeated misuse; analyse patterns.
All staff	Model and apply the policy; store devices securely; report breaches and concerns; make adjustments; record actions as required.
Pupils	If possible and age / developmentally appropriate, follow the phone-free rule, hand in devices, use approved arrangements only and report concerns.
Parents and carers	Support the policy, use the school office for contact, disclose relevant needs and collect a device where requested.

21 Communication accessibility and implementation

- The policy will be published on the school website and available in accessible formats on request.
- If possible and age / developmentally appropriate, pupils will be taught and reminded of expectations at the start of each school year and at appropriate intervals, using communication matched to need.
- New pupils and families will receive the rules through transition and induction.
- Individual expectations will be recorded, where relevant, in the pupil's communication profile, healthcare plan, Learning Support Plan, risk assessment or mobile phone exception plan, so that all staff use a consistent approach.
- Staff, agency staff and volunteers will receive relevant induction and updates. Staff authorised to search will receive additional guidance.

- Signs and classroom prompts will support consistent routines without creating unnecessary anxiety.
- The school will explain the policy rationale and sanctions to parents and respond to concerns promptly.

22 Equality impact

The school will apply the policy without discrimination. Leaders will consider the effect of the rules and sanctions on pupils with protected characteristics and pupils with SEND. The school will make reasonable adjustments and use accessible communication. Equality does not always mean identical treatment; decisions will be based on assessed need, legitimate aims and proportionate arrangements.

23 Recording monitoring and review

The school will record serious, repeated and safeguarding-related incidents through its approved systems. Leaders will monitor implementation at least annually, including:

- number and type of breaches, confiscations and searches;
- safeguarding referrals and online incidents;
- exceptions and reasonable adjustments, including review dates;
- patterns by age, phase, sex, disability, SEND and other relevant groups;
- loss, damage, complaints and staff consistency;
- feedback from pupils, parents and staff;
- changes to legislation, statutory guidance, technology and school arrangements.

The Headteacher will report material issues to the Governing Body. The policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner following a serious incident or a relevant change in law or guidance.

24 Complaints

Concerns should first be raised with the class teacher or relevant senior leader. Formal complaints will be considered under the school's complaints policy. A complaint about a safeguarding decision will not delay action needed to protect a child. Staff concerns about wrongdoing should be raised through the whistleblowing procedure.