

Mobile Phone and Digital Technology Policy (Ages 11-18)

Approving Body	Trust
Date of Last Review	March 2026
Statutory (Y/N)	N
Responsible Officer	BMAT CEO for and on behalf of the Trust

I. INTRODUCTION – PURPOSE AND SCOPE.

Beal High School recognises that today's students are the first generation to grow up with social media and digital technology as an integral part of their childhood. We believe in embracing technology as a powerful tool for learning and communication, rather than creating unnecessary barriers between students and the digital literacy skills they need for their future.

We acknowledge that simply removing young people from technology is not the solution – instead, we must equip them with the skills, understanding, and support to navigate the digital world safely and responsibly.

Rosie Wrighting MP

'I am one of few Members here today, and potentially the only woman, who had social media as a part of their childhood under the age of 16. Social media has defined my life and being literate in it has shaped my career for the good at times, but it also meant that there was a language barrier between me and trusted adults—a language barrier that I fear will only worsen and widen under a blanket ban.

I urge colleagues across the House, when talking about an entire generation, to bring them with us and not to send a message that it is simply easier to remove young people from social media than it is to remove the harmful content on it. Will the Secretary of State assure me that my generation and the generation that followed will be at the heart of this consultation?'

II. Legislative and Statutory Framework

This policy has regard to the following legislation and guidance:

Primary Legislation

- a. Education Act 2011 (Section 90) – which provides schools with the power to search for and confiscate prohibited items, including mobile phones
- b. Education and Inspections Act 2006 – relating to behaviour policies and discipline
- c. Equality Act 2010 – ensuring reasonable adjustments for students who may require mobile phones for medical or SEND purposes
- d. Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR – protecting personal data and privacy
- e. Communications Act 2003 – regarding malicious communications
- f. Protection from Harassment Act 1997

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Statutory Guidance and DfE Publications

- a. Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) (latest version) – our overarching safeguarding framework, including online safety
- b. Searching, Screening and Confiscation: Advice for Schools (DfE, 2022/latest update) – regarding powers to confiscate phones when necessary
- c. Behaviour in Schools: Advice for Headteachers and School Staff (DfE, latest version)
- d. Teaching Online Safety in Schools (DfE) – curriculum requirements for online safety education
- e. Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education (statutory from 2020) – includes teaching about online media, digital resilience, and respectful online behaviour
- f. Working Together to Safeguard Children (latest version) – multi-agency safeguarding framework
- g. Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment Between Children in Schools and Colleges (DfE) – includes cyber-enabled abuse

Non-Statutory Guidance

- a. Mobile Phones in Schools (DfE, February 2024) – non-statutory guidance supporting schools to prohibit mobile phone use during the school day, while acknowledging that schools may adopt approaches that suit their context
- b. Education for a Connected World (UKCIS framework) – digital literacy framework

III. **Our Approach**

This policy is built on trust, respect, and partnership with our students, recognising their capability to use technology appropriately when given clear guidance and autonomy. The Department for Education's February 2024 guidance recommends that schools prohibit mobile phone use throughout the school day. However, this is non-statutory guidance and the DfE explicitly recognises that headteachers are best placed to determine the right approach for their context.

We have adopted a proportionate, context-appropriate policy that embraces technology while maintaining high standards of behaviour and safeguarding. This approach is entirely lawful and reflects our professional judgment of what serves our students' educational interests.

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Core Principles

1. Embrace, Don't Ban: We view mobile phones and technology as valuable educational tools, not threats to be eliminated.
2. Digital Literacy: We prepare students to be competent, critical, and safe users of technology throughout their lives.
3. Student Voice: Young people are at the heart of this policy. Their perspectives, experiences, and insights shape our approach.
4. Bridge, Don't Widen: We aim to close – not widen – any language or understanding gaps between students and trusted adults regarding digital communication.
5. Proportionate Response: Our rules reflect actual risks and behaviour in our school community, not hypothetical worst-case scenarios.

IV. Policy Guidelines

During Lessons

- a. Mobile phones may be used when permitted by the teacher as part of learning activities
- b. This includes research, educational apps, photography/video for projects, collaborative work, and accessing digital resources
- c. When not in use for learning, phones should be kept in bags or pockets on silent
- d. Teachers will clearly communicate expectations at the start of each lesson
- e. Teachers retain the right to require phones to be put away at any time

During Unstructured Time

Students may use mobile phones reasonably and proportionately during:

- a. Break times
- b. Lunch periods
- c. Before and after school
- d. Free periods (Sixth Form)

Reasonable use means:

- a. Being present and engaged with those around you
- b. Not using phones in a way that excludes others from conversation or activities
- c. Respecting others' privacy (no unauthorised photography/recording)
- d. Keeping volume at considerate levels

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- e. Moving to appropriate spaces for phone calls

Prohibited Uses (At All Times)

- a. Any form of bullying, harassment, or unkind behaviour online or offline
- b. Sharing or accessing inappropriate content
- c. Recording others without permission
- d. Cheating or academic dishonesty
- e. Using phones during assemblies, examinations, or formal school events (unless specifically permitted)
- f. Any activity that breaches criminal law (e.g., malicious communications, harassment, sharing indecent images)

Special Circumstances and Reasonable Adjustments

In line with the Equality Act 2010, students may be permitted to carry/use phones where:

- a. Medical needs require access to health apps or communication with parents
- b. SEND requirements necessitate use of specific apps or devices
- c. Individual risk assessments determine phone access is necessary

Such arrangements will be agreed with the Headteachers, SENCO, parents, and relevant staff.

V. Educational Programme

We will support students' digital literacy through:

- a. Regular discussions about online safety, digital citizenship, and healthy technology use
- b. Student-led workshops where young people can share experiences and strategies with peers
- c. Involving students in policy reviews to ensure our approach remains relevant and effective
- d. Open dialogue about emerging platforms, trends, and concerns
- e. Critical thinking skills to evaluate online content and understand digital manipulation
- f. Regular updates reflecting the rapidly changing digital landscape

VI. Statutory RSE and Online Safety Teaching

In accordance with statutory guidance, we will deliver age-appropriate education on:

- a. Online safety, digital citizenship, and healthy technology use (Computing curriculum and RSE)
- b. Online relationships, consent, and respectful behaviour

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- c. Privacy, data protection, and personal information security
- d. Critical evaluation of online content and recognition of manipulation
- e. Understanding of relevant laws (Communications Act, Protection from Harassment Act, etc.)
- f. Risks including cyberbullying, grooming, radicalisation, and sexual exploitation
- g. How to report concerns and seek support

Parental Partnership

We encourage parents/carers to:

- a. Engage in open conversations with their children about technology use
- b. Understand that schools and families work together, not in opposition, on digital matters
- c. Recognise their child's digital competence while providing appropriate guidance
- d. Contact the school with any concerns about online behaviour or wellbeing
- e. Be aware of their own responsibilities regarding children's online safety at home.

Parents should note that incidents occurring outside school may still fall within our behaviour and safeguarding policies if they affect students' wellbeing or the school community.

VII. Safeguarding

In accordance with KCSIE, all staff are trained to recognise online safeguarding concerns including:

- a. Cyberbullying and online harassment
- b. Sexual violence and harassment, including sharing of indecent images
- c. Online radicalisation
- d. Child sexual exploitation and grooming
- e. Exposure to harmful content

While we currently have no significant safeguarding concerns related to mobile phones or social media, we remain vigilant. Students should report any concerns to a trusted adult (staff member, Designated Safeguarding Lead, or via our reporting systems), and all reports will be taken seriously and handled in accordance with our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Online incidents will be treated with the same seriousness as offline incidents.

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VIII. Sanctions (If Required)

Our community-wide respectful approach means sanctions are rarely needed. However, if this policy is breached:

- a. First instance: Conversation with student about responsible use; restorative approach
- b. Repeated issues: Involvement of form tutor/head of year and parents
- c. Serious breaches: May include temporary confiscation, loss of phone privileges during school day, and/or other appropriate consequences in line with our Behaviour Policy
- d. Safeguarding concerns: Will be handled in accordance with our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy; may involve external agencies

Sanctions will be proportionate, educational, and designed to restore responsible use rather than simply punish.

Criminal offences (e.g., sharing indecent images, malicious communications, harassment) will be reported to police in accordance with KCSIE.

IX. Staff Use of Mobile Phones

Staff should follow separate guidance on professional use of mobile phones and technology, including:

- a. Not using personal phones during teaching time except in emergencies
- b. Following data protection requirements
- c. Maintaining professional boundaries in all digital communications
- d. Never contacting students via personal devices or social media

X. Searching and Confiscation

Under the Education Act 2011, the school has the power to search for and confiscate mobile phones where there is reasonable suspicion of misuse. However, given our school's culture of respect and responsibility, such measures are rarely necessary.

If confiscation is required:

- a. Items will be stored securely and returned at an appropriate time

- b. Searches will be conducted in accordance with DfE guidance on searching, screening and confiscation
- c. Parents will be informed
- d. In serious safeguarding cases, phones may be examined (with appropriate authorisation) or passed to police

XI. Data Protection

All use of mobile phones must comply with UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018:

- a. Students must not photograph/record others without consent
- b. Any sharing of images or information must respect privacy rights
- c. The school will handle any data appropriately and in accordance with our Data Protection Policy

XII. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually with meaningful student input. We recognise that technology evolves rapidly, and our approach must evolve with it while maintaining our statutory duties following

- a. Changes to statutory guidance or legislation
- b. Safeguarding incidents or concerns
- c. Feedback from students, staff, or parents

"We must bring young people with us and not send a message that it is simply easier to remove them from technology than it is to teach them how to use it wisely."

Related Policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- a. Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- b. Behaviour Policy
- c. Anti-Bullying Policy
- d. E-Safety/Online Safety Policy
- e. Acceptable Use Policy (IT)
- f. Data Protection Policy
- g. Searching and Confiscation Policy
- h. RSE Policy

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Accountability

- a. Headteacher: Overall responsibility for policy implementation
- b. Designated Safeguarding Lead: Oversight of safeguarding aspects
- c. All staff: Responsibility to uphold policy and report concerns
- d. Trustees: Strategic oversight and policy approval