

Saffron Walden Primary Schools

Smartphone Use and Expectations Policy

Applies to: R A Butler Academy, Katherine Semar Schools, St Thomas More Catholic Primary School, St Mary's Church of England Primary School

Document version: 1.0 | Date: 11 January 2026

This is a combined policy and parent-letter pack with school-specific cover sheets and a shared signatory page.



R A Butler Academy

Smartphone Use and Expectations Policy

Headteacher: Emma Vincent

Effective date: On publication; full smartphone ban for primary pupils from September 2027

Review cycle: Every three years, or sooner if guidance changes.

Smartphone Use and Expectations Policy

This policy sets clear, consistent expectations for pupils, parents/carers, and staff on the possession and use of smartphones and other portable electronic communication devices in school. It harmonises practice across the Saffron Walden primary schools.

1. Purpose

- Safeguard pupils' wellbeing, learning and social development.
- Provide practical procedures for storage, confiscation, sanctions and communication.
- Align expectations across Saffron Walden primary schools..

2. Scope

Devices covered: Smartphones and any device capable of internet access, messaging, photography/video or social media (e.g., data-enabled smartwatches, tablets, music players with connectivity). Settings: On school premises, at the school gate, on school transport and during school-led activities (trips, clubs, residential).

3. Rationale

The group has set a smartphone-free approach due to risks to mental health, sleep, attention, exposure to harmful content, cyberbullying, and reduced play/social interaction among children. Families are encouraged to delay social media access until legal ages and to consider non-internet 'retro' phones if contact is essential for travel.

4. Policy timeline (phased approach)

1. Current policy (until August 2027): Only current Year 5 and Year 6 pupils who travel independently may bring a phone. Devices must remain off and stored all day. Families are strongly encouraged to choose a non-smart (call/text) phone if a device is needed. When current Year 4 reach Year 5 they must have a non-smartphone if needed for independent travel.
2. From September 2027 (full implementation): Smartphones are not permitted for any primary pupil on school premises or at school activities. If a phone is necessary for travel, it must be non-smart (call/text only).

5. Roles and responsibilities

Parents/carers

- Decide whether a device is necessary for travel; where necessary, provide a basic call/text phone and ensure your child understands this policy.
- Use the school office as the point of contact during the school day.
- Refrain from enabling social media for children below minimum legal age; monitor use of other data-enabled devices at home.

Pupils

- Comply with storage and 'off' requirements; never use a device on site without explicit staff permission.

Staff

- Monitor compliance, apply confiscation and sanctions fairly, and report concerns (including safeguarding and online harms) following school procedures.

Headteachers/Governing bodies

- Ensure consistent implementation, review the policy triennially, and update procedures in line with safeguarding guidance.

6. What is allowed (transitional period to Aug 2027 only)

- Current Y5–Y6 independent travellers may bring a basic phone; if a smartphone is already owned, it must remain off and stored throughout the day and may not be used for social media or internet access.
- Reasonable adjustments: where a device is required as part of a disability or medical need, the school will agree a personalised plan with parents (including storage and permissions).

7. Storage and daytime procedures (where a phone is permitted pre-Sept 2027)

- Devices must be switched off before entering the site and remain off until leaving the site.
- On arrival, pupils place devices in their class lockable phone box or a named, sealed envelope stored securely in the office.
- Devices may only be collected at the end of the school day. No exceptions without prior staff permission.

8. Prohibited uses (at all times)

- Calls, messages, browsing, gaming, listening to music, photography/video, or any social media use on site.
- Recording or sharing images/audio of pupils or staff; uploading/sharing content that humiliates, bullies or harasses others (incidents may be criminal and referred to police).
- Bringing other personal connected devices (e.g., data-enabled smartwatches, tablets).

9. Cyberbullying, online safety and safeguarding

Any use of a device to bully, harass, menace or share harmful content will be treated as a serious behaviour breach and a safeguarding concern; responses may include parental meetings, removal of device privileges, or referral to external agencies including police. Families are encouraged to use home internet controls and delay social media access until legal age.

10. Confiscation and sanctions

- If a device is seen or used on site without permission, staff will confiscate it immediately. It will be stored securely and returned only to a parent/carer at the end of the day. No negotiation with pupils or parents about on-the-spot returns.
- Repeat or serious breaches (including cyberbullying or recording others) may result in loss of the privilege to bring any device, behaviour sanctions per the school's policy, and/or police referral where appropriate.

11. Theft, damage and personal responsibility

Parents/carers accept that devices are brought to school at the family's risk; the school does not accept liability for loss, theft or damage except where legal negligence is proven. Pupils should mark devices with identification and keep them concealed while travelling.

12. Communications with parents/carers

The school office remains the first point of contact for urgent messages during the school day. The group will continue to share information on non-smart alternatives (e.g., basic call/text handsets) and local support through Smartphone Free Childhood community sessions.

13. Monitoring and review

All staff will monitor compliance and report incidents. Headteachers and governing bodies will review this policy every three years to ensure it remains effective and workable.