

Mobile phone-free school FAQ for parents/carers of Year 6 to Year 11

Why has TDMS introduced a mobile phone-free policy?

We have three main objectives:

1. To improve the mental health of our young people
2. To ensure a calm, orderly, and disruption-free environment is maintained
3. To follow current and emerging national expectations regarding mobile phones in schools as mandated by the DfE

There is a significant amount of national and international research that suggests there is a clear link between young people's mental health and the use of mobile phones. Our students' mental health is really important to us, and we are passionate about doing all that we can to support this.

There is also a growing body of research which suggests that learning, concentration, and attention in the classroom can be disrupted by the presence of mobile phones – even when in pockets, bags, or nearby. By removing this distraction, we believe that our students will benefit greatly, both inside and outside the classroom. The presence of a mobile phone could stop children getting to university, or a real alternative such as a good quality apprenticeship, when we want to help them live a great life.

In addition, the Department for Education (DfE, June 2026) expects schools to implement policies that ensure students 'do not have access to mobile phones throughout the school day, including during lessons, the time between lessons, breaktimes, and lunchtime'. This meets the Government's strict legal requirement via the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026. Our revised mobile phone-free policy ensures that TDMS continues to provide a learning environment that reflects best practice and national expectations.

During what parts of the school day will the new policy apply?

TDMS will be mobile phone-free throughout the entire school day. Just as now, students will keep their mobile phone out of sight upon arrival through the school gates and until they have left school site. The difference will be the collection, storage, and return of student phones during school hours.

Can my child bring a mobile phone to school at all?

Yes, students can bring their mobile phones for safety and travel reasons. However, they will be securely stored during the school day as part of our mobile phone-free policy.

How will the school manage students' mobile phones?

At the start of the day, all students' mobile phones will be collected during morning meeting line up via their tutor group and placed into a purpose-built mobile phone box. Mobile phones will be switched off. Each student will be allocated a compartment for their mobile phone in alphabetical order. The box will be securely stored during the day, and students will collect their mobile phones from the same box during afternoon line up at the end of the day. Mobile phones will only be switched on once students have left the school site.



Afternoon line up has been mentioned, how will this work?

We plan on making a slight change to the internal structure of our school day to create a swift 5-minute afternoon line up which will begin at 3.25pm and end at 3.30pm. Morning tutor time will finish 5 minutes earlier to provide the 5 minutes required for an additional afternoon line up.

Will my child's mobile phone be safe in school?

Yes. Mobile phones will be stored in purpose-built boxes, which will be kept in a secure location monitored by 360-degree CCTV. Access to this area is restricted to authorised members of staff, and students will not have access to it. During the morning and afternoon tutor line-up, your child will be the only person to physically handle their mobile phone, placing it into and collecting it from their tutor's mobile phone box. Alongside the register, we will maintain a clear daily record of which mobile phones are being stored by the school.

While no school can guarantee against every eventuality, we have put robust systems in place to ensure that mobile phones are stored safely and securely throughout the school day. However, we do need to be clear that neither Four Stones Gateway Trust nor the school accepts liability for any mobile phone or other device that is lost, stolen or damaged. If you choose to send your child to school with a mobile phone, we recommend that you ensure it is covered by your personal insurance.

A useful comparison is with the lockers provided at a gym. You cannot take your mobile phone into the swimming pool, so the gym provides lockers for its safekeeping. However, most gyms also make it clear that they do not accept liability for items that are lost, stolen or damaged while stored in those lockers. Our approach is similar: we provide a secure storage system, but responsibility for insuring personal devices remains with families.

How will the school ensure that the policy is enforced?

The success of this policy relies on a collective commitment from across our school community – students, staff, and parents/carers. Staff will monitor compliance throughout the school day and ensure that mobile phones are collected, securely stored, and returned at the end of the day. Regular reminders will be provided to students through morning meetings and tutor time. All staff will receive training before the policy is implemented to ensure that expectations are applied consistently and that students are supported in adapting to the new arrangements.

Where there is reason to believe that a student has retained a mobile phone or other prohibited device, searches may be carried out in accordance with the school's behaviour protocols, The Trust's behaviour policy and relevant statutory guidance. Senior leaders will have access to handheld security wands to support this process where appropriate. Our 2026-27 behaviour protocols will clearly set out the sanctions for failing to comply with the mobile phone-free policy. These sanctions will be applied consistently and will escalate where there are repeated breaches.

What happens if a student is caught using a mobile phone during school hours?

Every student will be asked daily whether they have a mobile phone in their possession. As a school, one of our core values is integrity and we expect students to be honest when responding to this question. If a student chooses not to and is subsequently seen, heard, or known to have used a mobile phone during the school day, it will be confiscated, and sanctions will be applied in accordance with our updated behaviour protocols.

Sanctions will escalate for repeated breaches of the policy and protocols. For example, on a first occasion, a student will spend the equivalent of a full school day (including social times) in reflections. In all cases, a parent/carer will be required to collect the confiscated mobile phone from school. Mobile phones will not be returned directly to students under these circumstances.

If a student refuses to hand over a mobile phone when instructed to do so by a member of staff, this will be treated as a serious breach of the behaviour policy and may result in further sanctions, including suspension.



How can I support the school in implementing this policy?

Parents/carers play a vital role in the success of this policy. You can support us by discussing the importance of the mobile phone-free policy with your child, encouraging them to always comply with the daily expectation, and reinforcing the benefits for learning and wellbeing.

We also ask for your support in upholding the consequences of the policy. If a student is found to have a mobile phone that has not been handed in, the mobile phone will be confiscated in line with the school's behaviour protocols. In these circumstances, a parent/carer will be required to collect the device from school, as it will not be returned directly to the student. By working together, we can ensure that all students benefit from a calm, focused, and mobile phone-free school environment which is what we all want for our school community and children.

What if my child has a medical condition that requires access to a mobile phone?

We recognise that a small number of our students have acute medical needs that require the use of a smartphone in conjunction with specialist medical equipment. If your child needs access to their mobile phone due to an acute medical condition (eg: type 1 diabetes), parents/carers should contact our SEND team on send@tdms.worcs.sch.uk to discuss further. We will set up a meeting and discuss the individual medical condition, and reasonable adjustment that will be applied for each individual case if needed.

I need to collect my child for an appointment. Will they be able to access their mobile phone?

Yes. Your child will wait at main reception whilst a member of staff fetches the purpose-built mobile phone box for their tutor group. Your child can then retrieve their mobile phone before collection/release from school upon which the mobile phone box will be returned to the secure location and the daily record updated.

To ensure this happens efficiently, school must be notified in advance of all collections. If your child has a pre-booked appointment, the attendance team (attendance@tdms.worcs.sch.uk) should be informed on the morning of the appointment so that arrangements can be made for your child to be collected from lesson, wait in main reception, and retrieve their mobile phone. If your child is unwell during the school day, a member of staff must give them permission to go home, and that member of staff will make arrangements for their mobile phone to be made available in the same way.

What happens if my child arrives late to school missing morning line up?

If a student arrives late to school (9.00am – 9.20am) they will enter via our standards gate where they will place their mobile phone into a designated 'late' mobile phone box. This mobile phone box will be securely stored for the duration of the school day. A record will be made of the device in the same way as for all other mobile phones handed in during the school day. Students will then be able to retrieve their mobile phone from this designated late mobile phone box from the large hall at 3.30pm.

What happens if my child arrives significantly late to school missing morning line up?

If a student arrives after 9.20am and has missed the morning mobile phone hand-in process, they must enter the school via main reception. Before being admitted into the main school building, the student will be required to hand in their mobile phone, which will be stored securely in the designated mobile phone box located within reception. A record will be made of the device in the same way as for all other mobile phones handed in during the school day.

At the end of the school day, students who have handed in their mobile phone via reception should return there to collect their device before leaving site. This process ensures that all students, regardless of their arrival time, can comply with the school's mobile phone-free policy.

What happens if my child has an after-school detention?

Students who are scheduled to attend an after-school detention will collect their mobile phones separately from the main afternoon line up process. To support this, heads of year will identify students attending detentions that day and ensure their mobile phones are collected first and placed in a separate storage box. This process helps to ensure that students attend their detention promptly and supports a consistent



approach to the school's behaviour systems. It also reduces the risk of students missing their detention and receiving any further sanctions as a result. Once the detention has been completed, students will be able to leave school with their mobile phone as normal.

How will I contact my child in case of an emergency?

We understand that this may be a concern for some of our families. In case of an emergency, you can contact school reception by telephone (01386 442060) or by email (office@tdms.worcs.sch.uk) and staff will ensure the message is passed to your child promptly. The school will also contact you if there is an urgent need, as we currently do, in line with the robust safeguarding and safety processes we already have in place. We have a member of staff on call during every lesson that will prioritise delivery of urgent messages to your child if required.

What if my child needs to contact me during the school day?

If a student needs to contact you, they can do so via our dedicated student reception, school main reception, their form tutor, achievement leader, head of year, our family support worker, or any member of the senior leadership team. We already do this daily when a student informs us that they need to contact home. We would expect this to only be needed if the student feels unwell or there is a significant concern from the student.

Will this policy impact my child's social interactions?

Currently we have a 'never seen, never heard' approach to mobile phones. However, we are aware from our current records that a few students find it very difficult not to check their mobile phones throughout the day, which sometimes leads to confrontation with members of staff and sanctions being issued for individual students including confiscation.

Our new policy will continue to encourage increased face-to-face interaction among students, particularly during social times when some students spend prolonged time in toilets. It will help foster better communication skills and relationships with peers, as well as reducing reliance on technology for socialising in isolation.

Are there exceptions for school trips or special events?

Exceptions may be made for day or residential trips offsite during school hours where phones are beneficial to support safeguarding. An example of a special event could be our Year 11 leavers celebration where students' may wish to take photographs for future memories. Any exception to the mobile phone-free policy will be carefully considered by the trip or event organiser and approved by the school. Where an exception is granted, students and parents/carers will be informed in advance of the arrangements and expectations for mobile phone use will be made clear.

What is the Trust's policy on smart watches?

Staff will ask students to ensure that their mobile phone is turned off. However, as a reminder smart watches, earbuds with recording features, smart rings, or Meta/Ray-Ban smart glasses, are all classed as mobile devices in our current Trust policy.

Will staff be able to use their mobile phones?

As working adults, staff will occasionally use their mobile phones for emails, to take the registers, or for internal communication within the school/Trust. Staff are clear on the expectations of the school and are fully aware of the importance of their role in the process. All staff are asked that

Will the Trust behaviour policy and school behaviour protocols change?

Yes – we are in the process of updating both these documents to ensure the mobile phone system is carefully built into it. We will share an updated version of the policy on our website and via the Head's update letter at the beginning of the Autumn Term 2026.

