

Mobile Phone Policy

Introduction

Mobile phone technology has advanced significantly over the last few years, and it continues to evolve. Wireless connections in particular have extended the capabilities of mobile phones, enabling access to a wide range of new content and services globally. Many phones now offer Internet and email access, alongside the most often standard functions of messaging, camera, video and sound recording.

Mobile phones, alongside other forms of technology are changing the way and speed in which we communicate. They can provide security and reassurance; however, there are also associated risks. Children and young people need to understand these risks in order to help them develop appropriate strategies for keeping themselves safe. As with e-safety issues generally, risks to children and young people can be broadly categorised under the headings of content, contact and conduct and managed by reducing availability, restricting access and increasing resilience.

Aim

The aim of the Mobile Phone Policy is to promote safe and appropriate practice through establishing clear and robust acceptable use guidelines.

This is achieved through balancing protection against potential misuse with the recognition that mobile phones are effective communication tools – which in turn can contribute to safeguarding practice and protection.

Scope

This policy applies to all individuals who have access to personal or work-related mobile phones on site. This includes practitioners, volunteers, committee members, children, young people, parents, carers, visitors and community users. This list is not exhaustive.

Policy Statement

It is recognised that it is the enhanced functions of many mobile phones that cause the most concern, and which are most susceptible to misuse. Misuse includes the taking and distribution of indecent images, exploitation and bullying.

It is also recognised that mobile phones can cause an unnecessary distraction during the working day and can be intrusive when used in the company of others.

When mobile phones are misused it can impact on an individual's dignity, privacy and right to confidentiality. Such concerns are not exclusive to children and young people; hence there is a duty to protect the needs and vulnerabilities of all.

It is appreciated that it can be very difficult to detect when such devices are present or being used, particularly in relation to enhanced functions, such as cameras. The use of all mobile phones is therefore limited, regardless of their capabilities. The aim is to avoid distraction and disruption of the working day, and to minimise the opportunities for any individual to make any covert images or misuse functions in any other way.

Designated 'mobile free' areas situated within the setting are

- Changing areas (including classrooms whilst children are changing for activities)
- Toilets

A zero-tolerance policy is in place with regards to the **use** of personal or work-related mobiles by any individual in these areas.

Guidelines

Staff

Practitioners are permitted to have their mobile phones about their person; however there is a clear expectation that all personal use is limited to allocated lunch and/or tea breaks.

Other than in agreed exceptional circumstances, phones must be switched off and calls and texts must not be taken or made during lesson time.

Practitioners are **not** permitted, in any circumstances to use their phones for taking, recording or sharing images and 'mobile free' areas must be observed at all times.

Practitioners are **not** permitted to use their own personal phones for contacting children, young people and their families within or of outside of the setting.

Driving

If any practitioner is required to drive in a working capacity, and has responsibility for the work mobile, the phone must be switched off whilst driving. It is strongly recommended that practitioners follow the same procedures regarding their own personal mobile phones.

Under no circumstances should practitioners drive whilst taking a phone call. This also applies to hands-free and wireless connections, which are considered a distraction rather than a safer alternative.

Work Mobile

The use of a designated work mobile is promoted as it is;

- ✓ An essential part of the emergency toolkit which is taken on off-site trips.
- ✓ An effective communication aid, enabling text, email messages and calls to be made and received.
- ✓ A back up facility should problems be experienced with the landline - or where contact needs to be made outside of work hours.

Effective security measures are in place to safeguard against any potential misuse. Only authorised individuals have access to the work mobile and it is stored securely when not in use.

Personal calls are not permitted to be made on the work mobile, other than in agreed exceptional circumstances. Contact or calls can be made via the work mobile in the event of an emergency. All calls are logged.

The work mobile is clearly labelled as such, and additional features such as cameras are disabled or not used.

Students

- In general, students should not bring valuable items to school, as they can easily be lost or stolen, which is often distressful for a primary age child.
- Students remain responsible for all of their personal effects whilst at school. When students enter the school grounds the school takes no responsibility for mobile phones. Mobile phones are brought to school entirely at the owner's risk. The school accepts no responsibility for replacing lost, stolen or damaged mobile phones.
- There are no reasons why a student needs to have in their possession or use a mobile phone during the school day.
- Parents are reminded that in cases of emergency the school office remains a vital and appropriate point of contact and can ensure your child is reached quickly and assisted in any appropriate way.
- Students are advised that if they bring a mobile phone onto the school grounds during the school day, their parents need to complete the **Mobile Phone Permission Slip** and they must hand the phone in at the office before school and collect it at the end of the school day. The phones will be secured in the office and students can retrieve their phone at the conclusion of the day.
- If students do bring their mobile to school it should be clearly marked with their name.

Sanctions

For students who fail to follow these guidelines, the following sanctions may be applied:

- Confiscation of the mobile phone (handed back to the student or parent at the end of the day).
- Communication with parents / guardians regarding mobile phone use at school.
- A student being banned from bringing a mobile phone onto the school grounds.

Inappropriate Use

Generally, a mobile phone will be used inappropriately if it:

- Disrupts or is likely to disrupt the learning environment or interfere with the operation of the school; or
- Threatens or is likely to threaten the safety or well-being of any person; or
- Is in breach of any law.

Inappropriate use of mobile phones will include students using them to bully, intimidate or otherwise harass other people through any SMS or text message, photographic, video or other data transfer system available on the phone. This type of misuse will be dealt with under the Student Behaviour Policy.

It should be noted that it is a criminal offence to use a mobile phone to menace, harass or offend another person. The school may consider it appropriate to involve the police if this takes place on the school site.

Parents, Visitors and Contractors

Parents, visitors and contractors are respectfully requested not to use their mobile phones in any of the designated mobile free areas. Should phone calls and/or texts need to be taken or made, use is restricted to those areas not accessed by children in order to avoid any unnecessary disturbance or disruption to others.

Under no circumstances is **any** individual permitted to take images or make recordings on a mobile phone. Any individual bringing a personal device into the setting must make sure that it contains no inappropriate or illegal content.

Mobile Phone: Parent / Guardian Permission

I have read and understand the above information about the appropriate use of mobile phones at Durham Gilesgate Primary School and I understand that this form will be kept on file at the school and that details may be used (and shared with a third party, if necessary) to identify a phone should the need arise (e.g. if lost, or if the phone is being used inappropriately).

I give my child permission to carry a mobile phone to school and understand that my child will be responsible for ensuring that the mobile phone is used appropriately and correctly while under the school's supervision, as outlined in this document.

I understand that the school will not accept any responsibility for loss, damage or theft of a mobile phone.

Parent / Carer Name	Signature of Parent Date
Name of Student	Signature of Student Date
Mobile Phone Details; 1. Make and model number 2. Mobile phone number 3. Colour / description of phone	