LONDON SOUTH EAST ACADEMIES TRUST

MOBILE PHONES AND SMART DEVICES POLICY

2026/27

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1. Introduction

This policy sets out the London South East Academies Trust (LSEAT) position on the use of mobile phones and smart devices in its schools. It has been developed having regard to the Department for Education (DfE) statutory guidance Mobile phones in schools (updated 29 June 2026, for implementation from 1 September 2026) and reflects the Trust's commitment to creating safe, calm and focused learning environments across all sites.

The Trust must have regard to the statutory mobile-phone guidance under section 550C of the Education Act 1996. The restrictions and local procedures in this policy are Trust requirements; they do not remove statutory duties to support medical needs, make reasonable adjustments or safeguard pupils.

This policy applies alongside each school's Behaviour Policy and should be read in conjunction with the Group Acceptable Use Policy, Trust Safeguarding Policy, Group Data Protection & GDPR Policy, Trust e-Safety Policy, Trust Social Media Policy and Trust Searching, Screening and Confiscation Policy. Staff must also follow the Staff Code of Conduct and current approved arrangements for bring-your-own-device (BYOD) access.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all pupils, staff (including agency staff and volunteers working in staff roles), contractors and visitors across all LSEAT schools. It covers personal mobile phones and smart devices with communication, imaging, audio/video recording or sharing capabilities, including but not limited to:

- Smartphones and feature phones
- Smartwatches or wearables capable of sending or receiving messages, calls or notifications, or recording images or sound, whether independently or when linked to a mobile phone
- Smart glasses and any other personal handheld or wearable device capable of communicating, photographing, recording or sharing images, audio or video, whether or not connected to a mobile or data network

Ordinary non-connected watches and spectacles are not covered. Necessary medical and assistive devices are addressed in section 10. This is a Trust-school policy; it does not replace College policies on learner phones or staff equipment.

The policy applies throughout the school day, including during lessons, the time between lessons, breaktimes and lunchtime. School-provided equipment and specifically approved learning laptops or tablets remain subject to the Acceptable Use Policy and applicable safeguarding and security controls. This does not permit pupils to use personal phones for ordinary lesson activities; individual exceptions are addressed in section 10.

In early years provision, use of approved devices must also follow the EYFS statutory framework and DfE guidance on children's screen use. Approval of equipment does not, by itself, authorise unrestricted screen use.

3. Responsibilities

Headteachers and Heads of School are responsible for implementing this policy within their school, communicating it to pupils and parents, and ensuring consistent enforcement by all staff.

All staff are responsible for modelling expected behaviour and enforcing this policy consistently. Persistent or serious breaches by pupils must be referred to the Headteacher / Head of School. Breaches of this policy by staff will be managed by the relevant line manager in accordance with the applicable HR and disciplinary procedures. Any safeguarding concern, including a staff allegation or low-level concern, must also be reported through the Safeguarding Policy; an HR referral must not delay that response.

The Group Chief Information and Estates Officer holds policy ownership and will review this document annually in consultation with the Deputy CEO and Executive Headteacher.

4. Mobile Phones and Smart Devices: Phone-Free School Day

LSEAT schools operate as mobile phone-free environments during the school day, subject to the individual exceptions in section 10. Pupils must not use or display a mobile phone or other device covered by this policy at any point during the school day, including during lessons, between lessons, at break and at lunchtime.

Pupils may bring a mobile phone or other device covered by this policy to school. Upon arrival, devices must be switched off and stored in accordance with the school's designated storage arrangement and must not be accessed during the school day, unless an individual arrangement under section 10 requires otherwise.

Each Headteacher / Head of School will determine and communicate the school's storage arrangement, for example secure lockers or handing devices to staff at the start of the day. The approach used at each school will be published on the school website using the local implementation schedule in Appendix A. Local arrangements must implement the Trust baseline and the exceptions in section 10, not create a general permission for pupil phone use.

Each school must identify a responsible custodian and provide secure storage, a reliable hand-in and return process, and a route for reporting loss or damage. Devices must be identifiable without opening their contents. Individual health information must not appear in the published local schedule.

5. Staff Use of Mobile Phones and Smart Devices

Staff must not use personal mobile phones or smart devices for personal reasons in front of pupils or while supervising or caring for children. Any work-related use must comply with the arrangements below and must not compromise supervision. This applies in classrooms, corridors, outdoor spaces and any other pupil-facing environment.

In EYFS and nursery settings, staff must not use personal electronic devices with imaging and sharing capabilities in the presence of children or on outings involving those children. These devices must be

stored securely in the designated area and used only in designated areas away from children during non-contact time. The general work-use exceptions below do not override these restrictions.

Subject to the stricter EYFS and nursery restrictions above, the following arrangements apply to staff use:

- Completing multi-factor authentication (MFA) required to access Elevare systems and business applications, using an IT-approved method and only where brief use is compatible with safe supervision
- Using a school-managed device to issue rewards, sanctions or homework through an approved platform. Personal handsets must not be used to communicate with pupils
- Responding to a genuine personal emergency, away from pupils and after arranging any necessary supervision cover
- Other necessary work use explicitly authorised in writing by the Headteacher / Head of School, with its purpose, location and review date recorded. Such permission must not override safeguarding, approved IT access or data-protection requirements

Any permitted use must be brief and discreet and must not interrupt supervision. Routine personal use while on duty is not permitted. Personal use during authorised breaks is permitted in designated areas away from pupils, subject to the Social Media and Acceptable Use Policies. Personal devices must be stored securely when not in use.

Staff must not photograph or record pupils on personal devices. School-managed devices must be used for educational recording, assessment and pupil communication, in accordance with safeguarding, acceptable-use and data-protection arrangements.

MFA must not be disabled to accommodate this policy. IT Services must provide an approved alternative, such as a security key or suitable school-managed device, where a personal phone cannot be used. Necessary staff medical or disability adjustments must be agreed individually with the Headteacher / Head of School, HR and safeguarding lead, with IT advice where needed.

Permission to use a device is not permission to access or store school data. Personal-device access requires current approved arrangements and IT authorisation. School data must not be stored on personal devices contrary to the e-Safety Policy or transferred to personal accounts or cloud storage. Loss, compromise or unauthorised disclosure must be reported promptly to IT Services and the DPO; safeguarding concerns must also be reported to the DSL.

Contractors and visitors, including parents and carers, must be briefed on relevant device rules when attending school. Personal calls and messages must be taken away from pupils. Operational use must be agreed with the school host for a specific task and location. Photography or recording involving pupils requires authorisation under the school's existing safeguarding and data-protection arrangements; staff restrictions cannot be bypassed by using another adult's device. Breaches must be reported to the school host or Headteacher.

6. Expectations for Pupils

All pupils will be informed of this policy at the start of each academic year, or on joining the school, and reminded of it at least once per term. Pupils are expected to understand and comply with the policy and to appreciate the reasons behind it, including the risks associated with mobile phone and smart-device use such as distraction, disruption and online bullying.

Where a parent or carer needs to contact a pupil urgently during the school day, they should contact the school office directly. Staff will relay messages as appropriate. Pupils who need to contact home should speak to the school office or a trusted member of staff.

Pupils must be able to seek help about online harm without the device rules preventing a safeguarding response. Staff should arrange supervised access to a device where necessary to report a concern, following section 9. Pupils must not be asked to copy, forward or circulate potentially unlawful images as evidence.

7. Communication with Parents and Carers

This policy will be published on each school's website and communicated to parents and carers at the start of each academic year. Parents and carers are encouraged to reinforce and discuss the policy at home, including the benefits of a mobile phone-free environment and the risks associated with mobile phone use.

Where parents or carers have questions or concerns, these should be directed to the school office in the first instance. Staff should respond in a timely manner and clearly explain the reasons for the policy. Unresolved concerns, including concerns about confiscation or searching, may be raised through the Trust's published complaints procedure.

8. Sanctions

Breach of this policy will be managed in accordance with each school's Behaviour Policy. Sanctions may include:

- Confiscation of the device for the remainder of the day
- Extended confiscation where the Headteacher / Head of School records a proportionate reason, duration and review or return arrangements
- Detention or other sanction in line with the school Behaviour Policy

Staff are protected from liability for loss or damage to items lawfully confiscated as a disciplinary penalty. The Headteacher / Head of School must consider the pupil's individual circumstances, including age, special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), medical needs, welfare and safe travel, when determining the appropriate sanction. Routine hand-in storage is not disciplinary confiscation; reasonable care must be taken of all devices in the school's custody.

Confiscated devices must be stored securely, with the reason, custodian and handover or return recorded. The pupil and parent/carer must be told the return arrangements. Any extended retention must be reviewed, and essential medical monitoring, communication support and safe travel must be

protected. Safeguarding concerns or evidence of a suspected offence must be handled under section 9, not ordinary return arrangements.

Where a breach gives cause for concern about a pupil's welfare, staff must follow the Safeguarding Policy and refer to the Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately.

9. Searching Pupils

Headteachers and staff they authorise have a statutory power to search a pupil or their possessions where there are reasonable grounds to suspect possession of an item for which a search is permitted by law. Schools must identify mobile phones and smart devices as items that may be searched for within the school's Behaviour Policy, explaining how this relates to the storage rules and individual exceptions. Bringing a permitted device to school and storing it correctly is not, by itself, a breach or a reason to search. Staff must follow the Trust Searching, Screening and Confiscation Policy and the DfE guidance Searching, screening and confiscation when considering a search.

Only authorised staff may carry out a search, following the Trust procedure on explanation, privacy, the pupil's needs, witnesses, permitted clothing searches, recording, parent notification and aftercare. Force must not be used solely to search for a phone or device identified only in school rules. This policy does not authorise staff to conduct a strip search.

Taking possession of a device does not automatically authorise examining its contents. Under the Trust's Searching, Screening and Confiscation Policy, only the Headteacher, DSL or Deputy DSL, duly authorised to do so, may examine data following a lawful search and seizure where there is a legally sufficient good reason. The reason and scope must be recorded; access must be limited to what is necessary. There is no general permission to browse messages, photographs or accounts.

Where staff suspect an indecent image of a child may be present, they must not intentionally view it or copy, print, forward, share, store or save it. Secure the device, avoid further viewing and refer immediately to the DSL or deputy. Follow the safeguarding procedure and police advice. Suspected offence evidence must not be deleted; where required by the DfE guidance, the device must be passed to the police as soon as reasonably practicable. Any other decision to examine, erase, retain or disclose data must follow the Trust procedure and DfE guidance.

10. Adaptations and Reasonable Adjustments

The Trust recognises that there are circumstances where access to a mobile phone or smart device during the school day may be necessary. Headteachers / Heads of School must assess each case on its merits, with the pupil, parent/carer and relevant safeguarding, SEND or medical colleagues. Grounds for exception may include:

- A medical condition requiring access to a linked device, for example blood glucose monitoring (Children and Families Act 2014)
- A disability where mobile phone access constitutes a reasonable adjustment (Equality Act 2010)
- Individual safeguarding or welfare circumstances, such as young carer responsibilities

Where an exception is agreed, the school must record the specific purpose, authorising role, necessary access arrangements and review date, confirm these with the pupil and their parent/carer, and review them regularly. Times and locations must reflect the individual need and must not interrupt continuous medical monitoring or access to essential assistive technology. An individual exception permits use only for the agreed specific purpose and does not authorise general or unrestricted use of the device during the school day.

Relevant staff must be informed of the agreed arrangements on a need-to-know basis. Where appropriate, record the arrangement in the pupil's healthcare, SEND or safeguarding plan and identify what to do if the device fails or is unavailable. Keep the record securely in accordance with the applicable retention arrangements.

11. Use Outside the School Day and on Visits

Headteachers / Heads of School are responsible for establishing arrangements for mobile phone and smart-device use in wraparound provision, on residential trips and on activities outside the normal school day. The school-day restriction continues on visits during school hours, subject to section 10. Schools must consider the educational, safeguarding and wellbeing impact on pupils and communicate clear expectations and contact arrangements to pupils and parents in advance. Staff must continue to follow section 5, including the EYFS outing restrictions.

Schools must remain vigilant to online safety risks and ensure that pupils know how to raise concerns with a trusted adult. Communication of this policy should be used as an opportunity to reinforce online safety messages in line with the school's obligations under Keeping Children Safe in Education.

12. Relevant Legislation and Guidance

This policy has been developed in line with the following legislation and guidance:

- DfE Mobile phones in schools (statutory guidance, updated 29 June 2026; schools to follow from 1 September 2026)
- DfE Behaviour in schools: advice for headteachers and school staff (non-statutory guidance, February 2024)
- DfE Keeping children safe in education 2026 (statutory guidance, in force from 1 September 2026)
- DfE Searching, screening and confiscation: advice for schools (July 2022; includes statutory guidance)
- DfE Early years foundation stage statutory framework for group and school-based providers (effective 1 September 2026), including paragraphs 3.6 and 3.94
- DfE Help for early years providers: Screen use (guidance to which EYFS providers must have regard)
- DfE Meeting digital and technology standards in schools and colleges: Cyber security and Filtering and monitoring core standards (live versions)
- DfE Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions (statutory guidance)

- Equality Act 2010
- Children and Families Act 2014 (section 100: support for pupils with medical conditions)
- Education Act 1996 (sections 550ZA-550ZC: searching and seizure; section 550C: mobile-phone guidance)
- Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 (section 36: statutory mobile-phone guidance)
- Education and Inspections Act 2006 (sections 91 and 94: disciplinary penalties and lawful confiscation)
- UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018, as amended
- Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (Prevent Duty)

13. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner in response to changes in legislation, statutory guidance or Trust requirements. Following approval, it must be published on SharePoint and on each school's website, communicated in an accessible form to pupils and parents, and covered in staff induction. Each school must complete and keep its local implementation schedule current.

IT Services and safeguarding leads must review the relevant access, device, filtering and monitoring arrangements under the existing digital and safeguarding governance arrangements. This policy does not replace technical controls or the required review of their effectiveness.

Constructive comment on this policy is welcomed and should be directed to the Group Chief Information and Estates Officer.

Appendix A. Local Implementation Schedule

Each school must complete this schedule before implementation and publish the local arrangements with the approved policy. Record individual pupil and staff adjustments separately and securely; do not include personal, medical or confidential security details here.

Arrangement	School-specific details to record
School and responsibility	School name; Headteacher / Head of School; responsible custodian and deputy; implementation date following approval; local review date.
Storage and return	Where and how devices are stored; identification and handover records; collection and return; late arrivals and early departures; procedure for uncollected devices.
Staff and other adults	Designated child-free areas and secure storage; visitor/contractor briefing; school-managed equipment and IT-approved authentication alternatives; how staff request an adjustment.
Individual exceptions	Who authorises and reviews exceptions; how records are kept securely and staff informed; action if essential medical or assistive equipment is unavailable. No individual details in this schedule.
Contact and activities	School office and urgent contact arrangements; pupil route to contact home; wraparound and visit arrangements, including residential contact and EYFS restrictions.
Incidents and confiscation	How to report a lost/damaged device, a safeguarding concern or data/security incident; authorised confiscation and return process; access to the Trust searching procedure and complaints route.

Completed by: _____ Date: _____

Confirmed by Headteacher / Head of School: _____