

Local Operating Procedure (LOP)

Use of Mobile Phones and Smart Devices

SEMH Independent School Policy

1. Purpose

This Local Operating Procedure (LOP) sets out how the school manages the possession and use of mobile phones and other smart devices by pupils during the school day.

The procedure is designed to:

- Promote a calm, safe and focused learning environment.
- Safeguard pupils and staff.
- Minimise distraction and disruption to learning.
- Reduce risks associated with cyberbullying, online harm, inappropriate photography and social media misuse.
- Comply with Department for Education (DfE) statutory guidance on mobile phones in schools and the school's Behaviour, Safeguarding, ICT Acceptable Use and Child Protection policies.

2. Scope

This procedure applies to:

- All pupils.
- All teaching and support staff.
- Volunteers and contractors working within the school.
- Visitors whilst on school premises.

The term mobile phone includes:

- Smartphones.
- Internet-enabled phones.
- Smart watches.
- Tablets with communication capability.
- Any device capable of making calls, sending messages, accessing social media, recording images, audio or video, or receiving notifications

In accordance with current DfE statutory guidance, the school operates as a **mobile phone-free environment during the school day**.

Pupils must not access or use mobile phones or other smart devices during:

- Lessons.
- Tutor time.

- Assemblies.
- Break times.
- Lunchtimes.
- Movement between lessons.
- Educational activities on the school site.

Any exception must be authorised by the Headteacher or Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and recorded where appropriate

Arrangements for Bringing Phones to School

Where parents permit pupils to bring mobile phones for travel to and from school:

On Arrival

Pupils must:

1. Switch mobile phones off or place them in flight mode.
2. Store them immediately in their individual pouches in the school office

During the Day

Phones must remain inaccessible to pupils.

At the End of the Day

Phones are handed back to students at the end of the day when their transport has arrived.

5. Staff Responsibilities

All staff must:

- Model appropriate device use.
- Enforce this procedure consistently.
- Challenge unauthorised phone use.
- Report safeguarding concerns arising from mobile device misuse.
- Follow GDPR and school data protection requirements when handling confiscated devices.

Staff should avoid personal mobile phone use in the presence of pupils except where operationally necessary

6. Parent and Carer Communication

The school will:

- Communicate the mobile phone policy at regular intervals
- Explain the rationale for restrictions on mobile phone use.

- Encourage parents to contact the school admin rather than pupils directly during the school day.

In emergencies, communication between parents and pupils will be facilitated through the school admin.

7. Safeguarding Considerations

The school recognises that unrestricted mobile phone access can increase risks relating to:

- Cyberbullying.
- Online exploitation.
- Exposure to harmful content.
- Unauthorised photography and filming.
- Peer-on-peer abuse.
- Social media misuse.

Any misuse presenting a safeguarding concern will be referred immediately to the DSL and managed in accordance with Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) and the school's safeguarding procedures.

8. Reasonable Adjustments and Exceptions

Reasonable adjustments will be made where required under the Equality Act 2010.

Exceptions may include pupils who require access to a device because of:

- A medical condition.
- Disability-related support.
- Assistive technology requirements.
- Specific safeguarding arrangements.
- Exceptional circumstances authorised by the Headteacher.

Examples include diabetes monitoring applications or medical alert systems.

All exceptions must be formally authorised and risk assessed where necessary.

9. Educational Visits and Residential Trips

Trip leaders may establish temporary arrangements for:

- Communication during travel.
- Emergency contact purposes.
- Boarding and residential accommodation.

Any arrangements must:

- Be documented within the trip risk assessment.
- Support safeguarding requirements.

- Not compromise pupil welfare.

10. Breaches of the Mobile Phone Procedure

The school recognises that pupils attending an SEMH provision may experience difficulties with emotional regulation, anxiety, attachment, impulsivity and social communication. Any response to a breach of this procedure will therefore be proportionate, restorative and informed by an understanding of the pupil's individual needs.

The primary aim of any intervention is to maintain safety, support learning and develop positive self-regulation rather than simply impose sanctions.

Initial Response

Where a pupil is found to be using or accessing a mobile phone or smart device without permission:

- Staff will respond calmly and professionally.
- Staff will seek to understand the reason for the device use.
- Pupils will be given a clear reminder of the school's expectations.
- Where appropriate, pupils will be encouraged to hand over the device voluntarily.
- Consideration will be given to whether the behaviour is linked to anxiety, emotional distress, safeguarding concerns, unmet need or dysregulation.

Supportive Interventions

Depending on individual circumstances, the following may be used:

- Restorative conversations.
- Reflection activities.
- Key worker support.
- Emotional regulation strategies.
- Review of individual behaviour support plans.
- Contact with parents/carers.
- Additional pastoral intervention.

The school recognises that some pupils may use mobile phones as a coping mechanism during periods of heightened anxiety. In such cases, staff will assess whether further support, adaptation or review of existing arrangements may be required.

Repeated Breaches

Where a pattern of unauthorised phone use is identified, the school may implement:

- Increased monitoring.
- Individual behaviour targets.
- A personalised mobile phone agreement.
- Meetings with parents/carers.

- Review of Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) outcomes where relevant.
- Assessment by pastoral, safeguarding or therapeutic staff.

Serious Misuse

More serious incidents may include:

- Recording or photographing others without permission.
- Sharing images, videos or personal information.
- Cyberbullying or online harassment.
- Accessing inappropriate online content.
- Behaviour that places the pupil or others at risk.

In these circumstances the school may:

- Confiscate the device in accordance with school procedures.
- Inform parents/carers.
- Refer the matter to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).
- Implement behaviour or safeguarding measures proportionate to the level of risk.
- Seek support from external agencies where appropriate.

Safeguarding Considerations

Any misuse involving online safety concerns, peer-on-peer abuse, exploitation, criminal behaviour, self-harm risk or threats to the safety of others will be managed under the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and may result in referral to external agencies, including the police where necessary. The school will act in line with Department for Education guidance on mobile phones in schools and safeguarding responsibilities

11. Storage and Liability

The school will take reasonable steps to safeguard confiscated or stored devices.

However:

- Pupils bring devices to school at their own risk.
- Parents remain responsible for ensuring appropriate insurance cover.
- The school accepts liability only where negligence can be demonstrated.

12. Monitoring and Review

The Headteacher and Proprietor/Governing Body will review:

- Behaviour incidents involving mobile phones.
- Safeguarding referrals involving technology misuse.
- Compliance with DfE statutory guidance.

- Feedback from staff, parents and pupils.

This procedure will be reviewed annually or following changes to legislation or DfE guidance.

