

Post 16 Updated Mobile Phone Policy for Implementation September 2026

Context

As of February 2026, the Department for Education (DfE) and upcoming legislation mandates that all schools in England should operate as mobile phone-free environments by default. The guidance prohibits mobile phone use, including smartwatches, throughout the entire school day—covering lessons, breaks, and transitions.

Key Aspects of the 2026 Guidance

- Default Prohibition: Schools are expected to ensure phones are not seen or used, with "phone-free" as the default, only allowing exceptions for specific needs.
- Scope: The policy covers the whole school day, including break times and lunchtimes.
- Implementation: Schools should explicitly include the policy within their behaviour policies, which are communicated to parents, staff, and students.
- Staff Usage: Staff should not use their own phones for personal reasons in front of pupils.
- Ofsted Inspection: From April 2026, Ofsted inspectors explicitly check on the implementation of these policies, evaluating how effectively they are enforced.
- Exceptions may apply for pupils with specific needs, such as those with SEND or medical conditions, which must be clearly outlined in the school's policy.

Post-16/Sixth Form Considerations

While the focus is largely on Years 7-11 to stop bullying and distractions, this guidance is encouraged for sixth forms to maintain a mature, productive, and safe learning environment.

Sixth formers (Years 12-13) are expected to be granted limited exemptions, allowing phone use within designated Common Rooms or Sixth Form Centres to reflect increased responsibility.

Proposed Trust Sixth Form Mobile Phone Policy Features for 2026 include:

- Designated Zones: Usage will only be permitted inside the Sixth Form Block (Study Hub, Private study areas), designated Sixth Form upper canteen area, and the Library.
- Devices: includes mobile phones, smartwatches, ipods and headphones
- "Never seen, never heard": Phones are banned in corridors, communal areas, and in front of younger students. If seen, devices will be confiscated.
- Lessons: Phones must remain out of sight and off, unless a teacher explicitly allows them for learning.
- Medical Exceptions: Students with registered medical needs (e.g. diabetes) are exempt, allowing them to use devices to manage their health

Key Takeaways:

- Consistency: This revised policy aims for a consistent whole school approach to reduce distraction and improve student wellbeing for all students as well as promoting a productive study environment for sixth formers.
- "Mobile Phone-Free" by Default: The school already expects sixth form students to act as role models to younger students, in this case they are supporting a mobile phone-free culture.
- Stricter Enforcement: The school will enforce this expectation of sixth formers with confiscation for 24 hours, and in cases of repeated breaches of policy the same system of pouches will be used as for KS3/4.