

SAFEGUARDING UPDATE

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Mobile phones in school: What schools need to know

The UK government has updated guidance on mobile phones in schools to help create calmer, safer and more focused learning environments. While this is non-statutory guidance, it is strongly recommended that all schools develop and implement a clear policy prohibiting the use of mobile phones during the school day.

Key points for schools

1. A mobile phone-free environment by default

Schools are encouraged to adopt a policy where pupils do not use or have access to mobile phones throughout the school day, including lessons, between lessons, breaktimes and lunchtime. The guidance supports schools in establishing such a policy and implementing it in a way that suits their context.

2. Clear policy development

Schools should ensure that their mobile phone policy is:

- Included in the overall behaviour policy or as a standalone document
- Clear, consistent and easy to follow
- Communicated to pupils, parents and staff
- Supported by behaviour expectations and sanctions where necessary (e.g. confiscation)

3. Communicating with families

It's important to explain to parents and carers why the policy exists and how it supports learning, wellbeing and safety. Schools are encouraged to use newsletters, meetings and induction events to make expectations clear and to involve families in supporting the policy.

4. Staff role and consistent enforcement

All staff should model the school's expectations by avoiding personal phone use in front of pupils during the school day. Clear guidance on adult behaviour helps reinforce the policy and supports consistent enforcement.

5. Sanctions and search powers

Schools have lawful authority to confiscate mobile phones if pupils breach the policy. Sanctions should be proportional and in line with the broader behaviour policy. Headteachers can authorise searches for mobile phones under statutory powers where they suspect a pupil has one in their possession against school rules.

6. Reasonable adjustments and individual needs

Schools must balance their mobile phone policy with other legal duties, such as making reasonable adjustments for pupils with disabilities or medical needs, for example where a phone is needed to manage a health condition.

7. Beyond the school day

Schools should consider how the policy applies during trips and residential activities to ensure that mobile phones do not disrupt the educational experience.

Read:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mobile-phones-in-schools>

AI in schools: What leaders need to know now

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is no longer something on the horizon, it is already embedded in the tools, platforms and apps our children use every day. From generative text and image tools to adaptive learning platforms, pupils are engaging with AI from increasingly young ages.

To support schools in navigating this fast-moving landscape safely and strategically, London Grid for Learning (LGfL) has launched its Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy Toolkit, a flexible guidance framework designed to help schools develop a clear vision, policy and practice around AI.

This is not a rigid template. It is a practical toolkit to help schools think through the implications carefully and proportionately.

Why this matters

AI presents both opportunities and safeguarding challenges.

Opportunities:

- Supporting teaching workload
- Enhancing accessibility
- Personalising learning
- Developing digital literacy skills

Risks:

- Data protection and privacy concerns
- Exposure to inappropriate or biased content
- Academic integrity issues
- Safeguarding risks linked to misuse
- Over-reliance without critical thinking

Schools must strike the right balance, enabling innovation while ensuring children remain safe.

What schools should be doing now

1. Develop a clear AI position statement

Schools should articulate:

- How AI may be used by staff
- Whether and how pupils may use AI tools
- Expectations around academic honesty
- Safeguarding boundaries

This should link to existing policies, including:

- Online safety
- Data protection (GDPR)
- Behaviour
- Acceptable use agreements

2. Put safeguarding first

AI does not replace professional curiosity or safeguarding oversight.

Consider:

- How AI tools process and store pupil data
- Age restrictions on generative AI platforms
- Monitoring misuse or inappropriate outputs
- Clear reporting mechanisms for concerns

Remember: children may already be using AI tools at home. Education around safe and critical use is essential.

3. Support staff confidence

Staff need clarity around:

- Appropriate professional use
- Data-sharing limitations
- Maintaining confidentiality
- Avoiding inputting personal data into public AI systems

Training and CPD will be key as this evolves.

4. Promote digital literacy

Rather than banning outright, many schools are choosing to:

- Teach critical thinking about AI outputs
- Explore bias and misinformation
- Help pupils understand how AI systems generate responses
- Embed AI awareness into computing and PSHE curricula

The goal is to develop informed, responsible users.

Further support

LGfL is hosting a webinar on 18th March to support schools with implementation and signpost further resources.

Leaders may find it helpful to:

- Review the AI toolkit
- Audit current AI use in school
- Identify immediate policy gaps
- Plan staged implementation rather than reactive changes

Policy toolkit: