CHESHIRE ACADEMIES TRUST

Mobile Phone and Smart Technology Policy

Trust-wide Model Policy

Adopted by the Trust Board for adoption by each Local Governing Body across Cheshire Academies Trust

Statutory status Statutory from 29 June 2026 under Section 36 of the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026, which gives the duty to have regard to DfE guidance on mobile phones in schools the force of law.

Policy title	Mobile Phone and Smart Technology Policy
Policy type	Trust-wide model policy (adopted in preference to a school-specific template)
Statutory / non-statutory	Statutory from 29 June 2026 — Section 36, Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026
Owner	Governance Director, Cheshire Academies Trust
Effective from	**On or before 29 June 2026 (the statutory commencement date)**
Next review	Annually, or sooner if statutory guidance or legislation changes. Next review: Autumn 2027

How to use this model policy

> This is the Cheshire Academies Trust model Mobile Phone and Smart Technology Policy. It is adopted by the Trust Board and is the policy each school should adopt, in preference to a stand-alone school template.
>
> Items in square brackets [like this] are the only elements a school completes locally before adoption — for example the school's name, the start and end of the school day, and the office telephone number.
>
> At Section 6 the Trust offers three operating approaches that are all compliant with the statutory duty. Each Local Governing Body selects the approach that fits its setting on adoption and records that choice; the unused approaches are then deleted in the school's adopted copy.
>
> This policy must be read alongside the school's Behaviour Policy and Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

1. Introduction and purpose

This policy sets out how Gayton Primary School manages the use of mobile phones and other smart technology by pupils, staff, and visitors during the school day.

This policy reflects:

- Section 36 of the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 (statutory from 29 June 2026), which inserts a duty for headteachers to have regard to Department for Education (DfE) guidance on pupils having and using mobile phones during school hours;
- The DfE's Mobile phones in schools' guidance (January 2026 update), which expects all schools to be mobile phone-free environments by default;
- The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework, which requires clear rules on the use of mobile phones and cameras in EYFS settings;
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (current edition) and the school's wider safeguarding responsibilities.

The duty introduced by Section 36 is a duty to have regard to the guidance; it is not a statutory requirement to ban mobile phones from the school site. A school may meet the duty either by not permitting phones on site or by requiring them to be handed in or stored (for example in lockers). Both approaches are set out at Section 6.

The Headteacher and the Local Governing Body share responsibility for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently and reviewed regularly. The Trust Board owns the model policy and keeps it under review against statutory developments.

2. Aims

This policy aims to:

- Create a calm, focused environment for learning and play;
- Protect children from online harms during the school day, including bullying, exposure to inappropriate content, and image-sharing;
- Support healthy attention, friendship, and emotional development;
- Give parents confidence that their child is safe and not distracted by devices in school;

- Provide clear, consistent expectations for staff, pupils, parents, and visitors;
- Make reasonable adjustments for children who genuinely need access to a device for medical or other documented reasons.

3. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All pupils on roll
- All school staff, including teaching, support, peripatetic, and supply staff;
- Volunteers, contractors, and visitors to the school;
- All times during the school day, including arrival, lessons, transitions, breaktimes, lunchtime, and any school-led activities on site;
- Educational visits, residential trips, and school-organised events (see Section 10).

Wraparound and after-school care arrangements run by the school are covered. Where wraparound care is delivered by a third-party provider, the provider's own policy applies, but the school will ensure the provider is aware of these expectations.

4. Definitions

Mobile phone means any handheld electronic device capable of making calls, sending messages, or accessing the internet via mobile data.

Smart technology with similar functionality includes smart watches, fitness trackers with messaging or call features, tablets with mobile data, smart glasses, and any other wearable or portable device that can connect, communicate, record, or display notifications.

Phone-free environment means children do not see, hear, or use a mobile phone or similar device at any point during the school day.

5. The school's position

Gayton Primary School is a mobile phone-free school. This means:

- Children should not bring a mobile phone or smart watch into school unless their parents have informed the school in writing and a clear arrangement is in place for storage;
- Where children do bring a phone (for example because they walk home alone), it must be handed in to staff on arrival and collected at the end of the day;
- Children do not see, hear, or use a phone or similar device at any point during the school day, including in the playground and at lunchtime;
- Smart watches must be set to display the time only — with notifications, calls, messages, and apps disabled. If this is not possible, the watch must be handed in on arrival;
- Devices with mobile data bypass the school's filtering and monitoring systems and pose a safeguarding risk. This is the main reason for the restriction.

6. How this works in practice

Approach C — Basic (non-smart) phones permitted, handed in on arrival

Pupils may bring a basic, non-smart phone — one that supports calls and text messages only, with no internet or mobile-data access and no app or messaging-app capability. Smartphones and smart watches are not permitted under this approach.

7. Reasonable adjustments and exceptions

Some children may genuinely need access to a device for medical or other documented reasons. The school will always consider reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010.

Examples of circumstances where an exception may be appropriate:

- A child with type 1 diabetes whose continuous glucose monitor is linked to a parent's or carer's phone;
- A child with a documented medical condition where rapid contact with a parent may be required;
- A child with specific SEND needs where device access forms part of an agreed support plan or EHCP;
- Exceptional family or caring circumstances agreed in writing with the Headteacher.

How to request an exception:

- The parent or carer writes to the Headteacher setting out the reason for the request, with any supporting evidence (for example a letter from a GP, paediatrician, or specialist);
- The Headteacher reviews the request in consultation with the SENCo and DSL;
- A written response is provided within ten school days, setting out whether the request is granted, on what terms, and for what period;
- Where granted, the exception is recorded centrally and shared with the child's class teacher on a need-to-know basis;
- Exceptions are reviewed at least annually, or at EHCP review where relevant.

An exception relates only to access, not to free use. The terms (when, where, and how the device may be used) will always be specified in writing.

8. Searches and confiscation

Mobile phones, smart watches, and similar devices are listed as items that may be confiscated under the school's Behaviour Policy. Confiscation will be proportionate and respectful.

In practice:

- If a phone or smart watch is seen or heard during the school day, the child will be asked to hand it to a member of staff;
- The device will normally be returned at the end of the day, either to the child or, in the case of a repeated breach, to a parent or carer;

- Staff will not access the contents of a device unless there is a reasonable safeguarding concern, in which case the DSL must be involved and the procedure set out in the Searching, Screening and Confiscation guidance followed;
- Searches of bags will only be carried out by the Headteacher or a member of staff authorised by the Headteacher, and only where there is reasonable suspicion that a device is being concealed and the child has been asked to hand it over;
- Staff are protected from liability for any loss or damage to confiscated items, provided they have acted lawfully and proportionately.

9. Responding to breaches

The school's approach to breaches is to be firm, fair, and proportionate, taking account of the child's age, understanding, and any known vulnerability or SEND.

Typical response:

- First-time breach: device confiscated, returned at end of day, parents informed. A reminder of the rules is given;
- Repeated breach: device confiscated, retained until a parent or carer comes to collect it. A meeting with parents may be arranged;
- Significant breach (such as filming or photographing other children or staff, accessing harmful content, sharing images, or use during a safeguarding-relevant moment): the matter is escalated immediately to the DSL and Headteacher. A full safeguarding response will follow, including referral to children's social care or the police where appropriate. The school will work in partnership with parents throughout.

Where a child repeatedly breaches the policy, the school will consider whether there is an underlying reason — including possible online coercion, family pressure, peer dynamics, or unmet need. Safeguarding always takes priority over sanction.

10. Specific situations

Early Years Foundation Stage

The EYFS statutory framework requires settings to have clear rules on the use of mobile phones and cameras to safeguard children. In the EYFS at Gayton Primary School:

- Children do not bring mobile phones or smart watches into the setting;
- Staff personal mobile phones are not used or visible in any area where children are present. Personal phones are stored in [a designated secure location such as a locked staff locker or the staff room] during contact time;
- Photographs and recordings of children are only taken on school-issued devices and managed in line with the Data Protection Policy and parental consent records;
- Visitors to EYFS settings (including parents helping in class, contractors, and visiting professionals) are asked to keep phones out of sight.

Educational visits and day trips

The default expectation is that children do not have phones or smart watches with them on educational visits. The Trip Leader will carry a school-issued mobile phone for emergency contact. Parents will be given the trip emergency contact number in advance.

Year 6 residentials

On residential visits (typically in Year 6), pupils do not bring mobile phones or smart watches. The school will set out arrangements for parental contact in advance. This is in line with DfE guidance, which expects the phone-free environment to extend to school-led residential activities.

Walking to and from school

The school recognises that some older pupils carry phones for safety on independent journeys to and from school. Phones must be switched off and handed to staff on arrival, in line with Section 6. Parents are asked to discuss with their child how the phone is to be used (and not used) on the journey.

Emergency contact during the school day

In any genuine emergency, parents should contact the school office on [phone number]. Office staff will pass any message to the child or arrange for the child to be collected. Children who need to speak to a parent during the day should ask a member of staff and may use the office phone.

11. Staff and visitor use of mobile phones

Staff in a primary setting are in close daily contact with young children, and the school applies particularly clear standards in line with the Staff Code of Conduct and Keeping Children Safe in Education.

Staff must:

- Keep personal mobile phones out of sight and on silent during contact time with children;
- Not use personal phones in any classroom, corridor, playground, toilet, or changing area where children are present;
- Only use personal devices for any work-related photography or recording in accordance with the trust's Data Protection Policy and only with appropriate parental consent in place;
- Treat any breach of this section as a potential safeguarding matter to be reported to the DSL.

Visitors to the school, including parent helpers, governors, contractors, and visiting professionals, will be informed of these expectations on arrival and asked to keep phones out of sight in areas where children are present.

12. Safeguarding considerations

This policy is part of the school's wider safeguarding framework. Particular safeguarding considerations in a primary setting include:

- Mobile data and Wi-Fi access on a personal phone bypass the school's filtering and monitoring, creating risks of access to harmful content even in school;
- Even in primary settings, phones can be used to facilitate bullying, exclusion, or recording of other children — including the creation and sharing of inappropriate images;
- Children may be pressured by older siblings, peers, or others outside school to breach the policy, including by recording or photographing in school;
- Self-generated images (including AI-generated content) are an increasing concern, including among upper primary pupils — staff should be alert to disclosures and refer immediately to the DSL;

- Children who repeatedly breach the policy may be experiencing pressure, coercion, or unmet need; the response will always consider these possibilities.

13. Roles and responsibilities

Role	Responsibilities
Local Governing Body	Adopt this policy and review it annually; receive termly data on breaches, exceptions, and any safeguarding concerns; provide constructive challenge to the Headteacher on consistency; ensure the equality impact is reviewed against protected characteristics.
Trust Board	Own and maintain the model policy; keep it under review against statutory guidance and legislation; ensure consistency of approach across the Trust.
Headteacher	Day-to-day responsibility for implementing the policy; authorise exceptions in consultation with the SENCo and DSL; ensure all staff, pupils, parents, and visitors are aware of expectations; report data on breaches and exceptions to the Local Governing Body each term.
Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)	Advise on safeguarding implications of any breach; lead the response where breaches indicate exploitation, coercion, harmful behaviour, or harm; contribute to decisions about exceptions.
SENCo	Identify children with SEND or medical needs who may require reasonable adjustments; document adjustments in writing and share with relevant staff; review adjustments at least annually or at EHCP review.
All staff	Apply the policy consistently and kindly; model appropriate use of personal devices; follow the staff section (Section 11) without exception; record breaches in line with the school procedure; escalate safeguarding concerns to the DSL immediately.
Pupils	Follow the rules every day; hand in any phone or smart watch on arrival, in line with the school's approach; tell a trusted adult if they feel worried or pressured about a device.
Parents and carers	Support the policy and reinforce expectations at home; contact the school office (not your child's phone) if you need to reach your child during the day; tell the school in writing if your child has a medical or other need that may require a reasonable adjustment; talk to your child about online safety and the school's expectations.

14. Communication with parents and carers

Effective implementation depends on a strong partnership with parents. The school will communicate this policy through:

- A letter or email to all parents on adoption of the policy, and again at the start of each academic year;
- Publication of the policy on the school website;
- Inclusion in the home–school agreement;
- Age-appropriate assemblies and PSHE lessons for children;
- Mention at parent welcome evenings, transition events, and Year 6 residential briefings.

Parents new to the school at any point during the year will be informed of the policy as part of their child's induction.

15. Monitoring and review

The school will keep simple records of:

- Devices handed in and any breaches;
- Exceptions granted, with rationale;
- Any safeguarding concerns arising from breaches;
- Any parental complaints or queries about the policy.

This information will be shared with the Local Governing Body each term. The Local Governing Body will review whether there is any disproportionate impact across groups of children (for example by SEND, FSM, ethnicity, or sex), in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty.

The policy will be reviewed annually by the Local Governing Body, or sooner if statutory guidance or legislation changes. The Trust Board will keep the model policy under review and re-issue it where statutory developments require.

16. Legal and statutory framework

This policy reflects duties under:

- Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026, Section 36 (in force from 29 June 2026);
- Education Act 1996 (as amended by Section 36 — duty to have regard to guidance on use of mobile phones);
- Education and Inspections Act 2006 (search and confiscation powers);
- Equality Act 2010;
- Human Rights Act 1998;
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR;
- Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework;
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (current edition);
- DfE Mobile phones in schools' guidance (January 2026 update);
- DfE Behaviour in Schools guidance;
- DfE Searching, Screening and Confiscation guidance.