



Department
for Education

Toolkit for schools – communicating your policy for prohibiting the use of mobile phones in schools with parents

This toolkit provides examples and information to help you communicate with parents and pupils about your school’s policy on prohibiting the use of mobile phones. It should be read alongside the mobile phones in schools guidance and the [behaviour in schools](#) guidance as the school’s approach to implementing its mobile phone policy should be consistent with its whole school approach to behaviour.

Facts and figures to support discussions with parents

By the age of 12, 97% of children own a mobile phone.¹ While mobile phone ownership is very high once a pupil starts secondary school education, it remains parents’ responsibility for deciding whether their child has a phone or not.

The majority (63%) of 8-11-year-olds use social media and messaging apps, rising to 93% for children between 12 and 15 years old.² By understanding which apps their children are using, parents can make informed choices about their child’s mobile phone use and support schools in providing education about online safety.

The National Behaviour Survey (2021-2022) found that 29% of secondary school pupils (rising to 40% for key stage 4 pupils) reported mobile phones being used without permission in most of their lessons.³ This not only distracts the single pupil using the phone, but disrupts the lesson for a whole class, and diverts teachers’ efforts away from learning. Parents can play an important role in supporting the school in effectively implementing its policy on mobile phones and eliminating this form of distraction for pupils in lessons.

¹ [Children’s Media Use and Attitudes Report 2023 - Ofcom](#)

² [Children’s Media Use and Attitudes Report 2023 - Ofcom](#)

³ [Department for Education \(2023\) National Behaviour Survey: Findings from Academic Year 2021/22](#)

Mobile phones have already been prohibited or restricted in one in four countries worldwide,⁴ including France, The Netherlands and several Australian states and territories. It may be helpful, when setting out a new position to parents, to explain that restrictions on the use of mobile phones is not unique to schools in England.

Screen time can displace positive activities.⁵ Socialising, exercise, and good sleep are positive influences on wellbeing. All these can be displaced by screen time. By prohibiting the use of mobile phones during break and lunchtimes at school as well as in lessons, more time for socialising and exercise can be created during the school day. Parents should be encouraged to consider the impact screen time has on their child's sleep and work together with schools to promote children's wellbeing.

One in five children have experienced bullying online. Data from Office of National Statistics (2020) suggests that one in five children (19%) aged 10-15 experienced at least one type of bullying behaviour online, and out of them, around three quarters (72%) said they experienced at least some of it at school or during school time. Around half of children (52%) who experienced online bullying behaviours said they would not describe them as bullying and around one in four (26%) did not report their experiences.⁶

Three in ten pupils cite making and maintaining friendships and their mental health as a cause of worry, anxiety or depression.⁷ By removing mobile phones, children and young people can spend more time staying active and socialising face to face with their peers, activities which have a positive impact on wellbeing.⁸

Ways to communicate with parents about mobile phones

Communicating the policy to new parents and pupils and reinforcing the policy with existing parents and pupils are important ways to ensure all members of the school community clearly understand expectations relating to mobile phone use. When changes are made to the way in which mobile phones are managed in schools or in response to particular issues that arise, clear and thorough communication with parents and pupils is vital to emphasise the school's expectations.

⁴ [UNESCO \(2023\) Global education monitoring report, 2023: technology in education: a tool on whose terms?](#)

⁵ [Royal College Paediatrics and Child Health \(2019\) The health impacts of screen time - a guide for clinicians and parents](#)

⁶ [Office for National Statistics \(ONS\) \(2020\) Online bullying in England and Wales: year ending March 2020.](#)

⁷ [Department for Education \(2023\) National Behaviour Survey: Findings from Academic Year 2021/22](#)

⁸ [Royal College Paediatrics and Child Health \(2019\) The health impacts of screen time - a guide for clinicians and parents](#)

It is important that schools engage collaboratively with parents. Prohibiting mobile phones from school will not eliminate all risks associated with children using a mobile phone. Good, clear communication about the risks of mobile phone use and the benefits of mobile phone-free time can support parents in managing their child's mobile phone use outside school.

Introducing or amending a mobile phone policy

Headteachers should decide how this policy is best implemented in the context of their school and how specific cases are managed. Gaining parental support can help a school successfully implement its policy. The following tips can help a school successfully implement a new policy on the use of mobile phones.

- consulting parents and pupils when deciding how to introduce or amend the school's mobile phone policy
- ensure all pupils and parents are informed well in advance and in the run up to a change in policy
- use trial days and weeks before enforcing a new policy to support every pupil to meet the expectations
- use a variety of methods of communication to ensure that all parents are familiar with the school's change in policy on mobile phone use
- explain the benefits of prohibiting the use of mobile phones in schools to parents
- communicate directly with parents of pupils who may need a reasonable adjustment or adaptation to the school's policy to co-produce a suitable plan

Reinforcing an existing mobile phone policy

Even when a policy is established, regular reminders ensure parents and pupils know that this is something the school is paying attention to and taking seriously. A variety of methods of communication can be used to reinforce the school's policy.

- share positive experiences which have resulted from successfully establishing a mobile phone-free environment with parents
- encourage parents to reinforce the school's policy at home and support the creation of a culture free from the distraction of mobile phones
- reassure parents that in an emergency they can contact the school office to get a message to their child

Methods of communication with parents

Regular, one-way communication (such as newsletters, emails, and messages home via pupils) can be useful to provide key messages, however this should be interspersed throughout the school year with two-way communication, such as phone calls (where appropriate), open evenings and induction events. By utilising a range of methods, it is

more likely that messages will reach all parents and be reinforced.⁹ Communication methods schools should consider include:

- letters, newsletters and emails
- videos
- social media
- parents evenings and induction events
- websites

Maintained schools, academies, non-maintained special schools, and independent schools should publish details of the school's policy on prohibiting the use of mobile phones, either within the existing behaviour policy (which, for maintained schools, other than hospital schools and pupil referral units, must be published on the school website or, if the school has no website, another website parents can access)¹⁰ or as its own standalone document.

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⁹ Be aware that in some situations the law may require certain communications to be in specific forms such as in writing or on paper.

¹⁰ [The School Information \(England\) Regulations 2008 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)