



**The Skylark Federation
Mobile Phone and Smart Device Policy**

Governance

Chair of Governors	Peter Clark
Interim Executive Headteacher	Matt Dean
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Linked Policies	Therapeutic Behaviour Policy Safeguarding Policy Online Safety Policy
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Introduction

We aim to create calm, safe and inclusive learning environments where children can learn, play and build positive relationships free from unnecessary digital distraction. As part of this commitment, we are introducing a **Smartphone-Free Schools Policy**. This policy reflects our belief that primary-aged children benefit most from real-life social interactions, hands-on learning, and time away from digital distractions.

By limiting the presence of smartphones and internet-enabled devices on school grounds, we aim to support children's emotional development, protect their wellbeing, and encourage a stronger sense of community within our schools. We ask for the support of parents and carers in helping us uphold this important approach.

Smartphone Ban Staggered Approach

- From 1st October 2026 only pupils in Year 6 will be allowed to bring in a smartphone, although brick phones are still preferred. All other pupils must not bring in a smartphone at all. If necessary, a brick phone allowing voice calls and texts without internet access is allowed.
- From 1st January 2027, **no pupils** will be allowed to bring in a smartphone. If necessary, a brick phone can be brought in to school by Year 5 and Year 6 pupils only. For pupils in Year Nursery to Year 4 we are not expecting the need to bring in mobile phones of any type.
- Any phone that is brought in must be handed in to the school secretary upon arrival and will be stored securely in the school office and returned to the pupil when leaving. These phones will not be used during the school day and must be turned off whilst at school.
- If there is a medical reason why a child requires a smartphone, this must be discussed with the Head of School first.

Vision and Ethos

This policy reflects the federation behaviour values of *Respect, Kindness* and *Resilience*.

Purpose

To set out clear expectations regarding smartphones and internet-enabled devices across all Skylark schools.

Rationale

The federation recognises concerns relating to online safety, cyberbullying, inappropriate content, privacy risks, distraction from learning and the impact of excessive smartphone use on wellbeing and relationships.

Scope

Applies to pupils, families, visitors and volunteers when pupils are present. The policy applies on school grounds, educational visits and residential visits.

Research and Evidence Base

Informed by DfE mobile phone guidance, safeguarding practice, Smartphone Free Childhood resources and concerns regarding distraction, cyberbullying, sleep disruption and online harms.

Safeguarding and KCSIE

This policy should be read alongside Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE), the Safeguarding Policy, Behaviour Policy and Online Safety Policy. Online concerns may constitute safeguarding concerns and will be reported to the DSL.

Smartphone-Free Childhood

The federation supports Smartphone Free Childhood and encourages families to consider delaying smartphone ownership and social media access.

Monitoring and Review

The policy will be reviewed annually to ensure alignment with statutory guidance and federation priorities.

Smartwatches and Internet-Enabled Devices

Smartwatches and any other devices capable of messaging, calls, photography, internet access or social media are treated as smartphones under this policy.

Educational Visits and Residential

School leaders may set specific arrangements where communication devices are required for safeguarding or operational reasons.

Therapeutic and Restorative Response

Where a pupil brings a prohibited device, staff will seek to understand the circumstances, work with families and apply proportionate, educational and restorative responses consistent with the Federation Therapeutic Behaviour Policy. Behaviour is viewed as communication and responses should support learning and responsibility.

Confiscation and Storage

Devices brought contrary to this policy may be securely stored during the school day. Parents/carers may be required to collect confiscated devices where appropriate.

Safeguarding

This policy supports safeguarding by reducing opportunities for cyberbullying, inappropriate image sharing, online exploitation and exposure to harmful content.

Equality and Reasonable Adjustments

The federation is committed to equity. Reasonable adjustments may be agreed for pupils with SEND, medical conditions or exceptional circumstances.

Partnership with Parents and Carers

Families are asked to support a smartphone-free approach and reinforce responsible technology habits outside school. See **Expectations for Parents, Carers and Visitors**.

Roles and Responsibilities

Governors monitor implementation. School leaders oversee procedures. Staff apply the policy consistently and fairly. Parents/carers and pupils are expected to support the policy.

Expectations for Pupils

The Skylark Federation is committed to maintaining smartphone-free schools. Pupils should not bring smartphones, smartwatches or other internet-enabled communication devices onto school sites unless an agreed exception has been authorised by the Head of School or Executive Headteacher.

Where a child genuinely requires a phone for travel arrangements to and from school, families are strongly encouraged to provide a basic non-internet enabled mobile phone ("brick phone"). Any approved device brought onto the school site must be switched off and handed to the school secretary immediately upon arrival. Devices will be stored securely and returned at the end of the school day.

Pupils must not access mobile phones or other prohibited devices during the school day, including before-school activities, lessons, transitions around school, breaktimes, lunchtimes, educational visits or residential visits unless specifically authorised by staff.

Where a device is brought into school contrary to this policy, staff will respond in line with the Skylark Federation Therapeutic Behaviour Policy, seeking to understand the circumstances, work in partnership with families and apply fair, proportionate and restorative responses that support children to learn from the experience whilst maintaining the safety and wellbeing of the wider school community.

Expectations for Parents, Carers and Visitors

The Skylark Federation is committed to creating calm, safe and connected school environments where positive relationships and meaningful interactions are prioritised. Parents, carers and visitors play an important role in supporting this ethos and modelling healthy habits around technology use for children.

While on school premises, all visitors, parents and carers are expected to ensure that mobile phones and smart devices are switched off or placed on silent mode. We strongly encourage parents and carers not to use mobile phones during drop-off and collection times. These moments provide valuable opportunities to talk with children, celebrate their day, build relationships and model positive communication. We want children's first and last interactions of the school day to be with the important adults in their lives rather than with a device.

Parents, carers and visitors must:

- Keep mobile phones and smart devices switched off or on silent whilst on school premises.
- Avoid making or receiving calls during drop-off and collection times unless there is an urgent reason.
- Not photograph, film or audio-record children, staff or other families without prior permission.
- Respect the privacy, dignity and safeguarding rights of all members of the school community.
- Not share images, recordings or information from school events or activities on social media without appropriate consent.
- Support the federation's smartphone-free approach and promote responsible technology use both at home and at school.

Where the use of a mobile phone raises safeguarding concerns, breaches privacy, or impacts the safe and effective operation of the school, school leaders may ask individuals to stop using their device or leave the site if necessary. Any concerns will be managed in accordance with the federation's safeguarding procedures and behaviour values of Respect, Kindness and Resilience.

Expectations for Staff

As role models, staff play a vital role in promoting the federation's commitment to healthy, balanced and responsible use of technology. Staff are expected to model the behaviours and standards that we wish to see in our pupils, demonstrating that relationships, learning, safeguarding and professional interactions take priority over personal device use. The expectations below support the federation's behaviour values of Respect, Kindness and Resilience and align with our therapeutic approach to behaviour.

Staff may bring personal mobile phones onto school sites but should ensure that they are switched to silent mode during the school day.

Staff are expected to:

- Keep personal mobile phones out of sight and use them only during breaks, lunchtime or in non-pupil-facing areas unless there is an exceptional circumstance.
- Avoid using personal mobile phones whilst supervising pupils, during lessons, assemblies, educational visits, or other activities where pupils are present.
- Ensure that mobile phone use does not detract from supervision, safeguarding responsibilities or professional duties.
- Never use personal devices to photograph, film, or record pupils.
- Use school-approved devices and systems for educational, communication, or safeguarding purposes.
- Follow all safeguarding, data protection, confidentiality and online safety requirements relating to the use of technology.
- Model positive technology habits and demonstrate to pupils that face-to-face communication is valued and prioritised.

The federation recognises that staff may occasionally need access to a personal phone due to family, medical or emergency circumstances. Where this is the case, staff should inform a member of the leadership team and make appropriate arrangements to ensure that pupils remain safely supervised and learning is not disrupted.

When working with children, staff should seek to be fully present and engaged. Just as we encourage families to talk to their children rather than their phones at the beginning and end of the school day, we expect staff to model the same behaviours throughout the school day by prioritising relationships, communication and interaction with pupils above personal technology use.

Staff Mobile Phone Use During Educational Visits and Off-Site Activities

The Skylark Federation recognises that mobile phones play an important role in ensuring effective communication, safeguarding and emergency response during educational visits and off-site activities. Staff may therefore carry and use mobile phones where this supports the safe organisation and management of the visit.

Staff are expected to:

- Ensure that at least one designated member of staff has access to a charged mobile phone for emergency purposes at all times.
- Use mobile phones professionally and only where necessary to support the visit, communication with school, transport providers, emergency services or other approved contacts.
- Avoid personal use of mobile phones whilst supervising pupils, except in exceptional circumstances.
- Ensure that supervision and safeguarding responsibilities are not compromised by mobile phone use.
- Never use personal devices to photograph, film or record pupils unless this has been authorised as part of the visit arrangements and is consistent with the federation's safeguarding, data protection and image consent procedures.
- Use school-issued devices where available and appropriate.
- Protect confidential and personal information at all times and ensure that mobile devices are used in accordance with GDPR and data protection requirements.

Residential visits, adventurous activities and visits involving large groups may require staff to have more frequent access to mobile phones for operational and safeguarding reasons. In such cases, the Visit Leader will determine appropriate arrangements during the planning process and risk assessment.

Staff should remain mindful that they are role models for pupils during educational visits. Whilst mobile phones are an important safeguarding and communication tool, face-to-face interaction, engagement with pupils and active supervision must remain the priority at all times.

Mobile phones carried by staff during educational visits are considered safeguarding and communication tools rather than personal devices. Their use should be proportionate, professional and focused on supporting the safe and successful delivery of the visit.

https://plumptonprimary.sharepoint.com/sites/slt/_layouts/15/Doc.aspx?sourcedoc={FA95C231-F4AA-45BF-89F1-2E83204F811C}&file=SLT07.07.26.docx&action=default&mobileredirect=true&DefaultItemOpen=1

Useful Links and Further Information

The Skylark Federation recognises that families may wish to access further information about smartphone-free schools, online safety and healthy childhood development. The following resources provide additional guidance and research that have informed this policy.

Department for Education: Mobile Phones in Schools

The Department for Education's statutory guidance sets out the expectation that schools should be **mobile phone-free environments by default**, with pupils not having access to mobile phones during the school day except in agreed exceptional circumstances.

Smartphone Free Childhood

Smartphone Free Childhood is a parent-led movement which provides information, research summaries and practical advice to support families in making informed decisions about smartphones, social media and childhood.

The federation does not endorse any particular organisation or campaign; however, parents and carers may find these resources helpful when considering how to support healthy technology use and children's wellbeing.

Additional Sources of Advice

UK Safer Internet Centre

<https://saferinternet.org.uk>

NSPCC Online Safety Hub

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/>

Childnet

<https://www.childnet.com>

Internet Matters

<https://www.internetmatters.org>

The Skylark Federation recognises that supporting children to develop healthy relationships with technology requires a strong partnership between school and home. We encourage families to engage with the guidance and resources listed above and to consider how smartphone use, online activity and screen time can be managed in ways which promote children's safety, wellbeing, relationships and learning. Consistent with our behaviour values of Respect, Kindness and Resilience, we believe that children benefit most when adults model positive technology habits and prioritise meaningful face-to-face interactions.

Appendix A: Skylark Mobile Technology Charter

Our Shared Commitment

At the Skylark Federation, we believe technology should enhance childhood, not replace it. We are committed to working together to promote healthy, safe and responsible use of technology.

RESPECT

- Respect ourselves and others online.
- Protect privacy and personal information.
- Use technology safely and appropriately.

KINDNESS

- Use kind words and actions online.
- Support others experiencing difficulties online.
- Report concerns to trusted adults.

RESILIENCE

- Develop balanced technology habits.
- Enjoy activities away from screens.
- Learn from mistakes and make positive choices.

Our Shared Digital Promise

As Pupils We Will	As Families We Will	As Staff We Will
• Use technology safely • Follow school expectations • Tell trusted adults about concerns	• Support healthy habits • Monitor age-appropriate access • Work with school	• Model responsible use • Teach online safety • Respond consistently

Smartphone-Free Childhood Family Pledge

- Encourage play, creativity and friendships.
- Consider delaying smartphone ownership where possible.
- Promote age-appropriate technology use.
- Talk regularly about online safety.
- Model healthy technology habits.

As members of our school community, pupils, parents/carers and staff commit to the expectations within this charter and work together to ensure our schools are safe, inclusive and successful places to learn and grow.

Appendix B: Letter to Families

Dear Skylark Families,

Introducing Our Smartphone-Free Schools Commitment

At Skylark Federation, our vision is to create safe, nurturing and inspiring environments where children can learn, grow and thrive. As part of this commitment, we will be introducing a Smartphone-Free Schools approach across our schools.

There has been increasing discussion about the impact of smartphones and social media on children's wellbeing, mental health, relationships and learning. As educators, we see first-hand the importance of helping children develop confidence, resilience, friendships and independence without the pressures that can sometimes accompany smartphone ownership and social media use.

This decision follows careful consideration of emerging evidence, conversations with families and the growing national movement towards smartphone-free childhoods. Similar approaches have been adopted successfully by a number of primary schools across the country.

What Will Change?**Smartphone Ban Staggered Approach:**

- From 1st October 2026 only pupils in Year 6 will be allowed to bring in a smartphone, although brick phones are still preferred. All other pupils must not bring in a smartphone at all. If necessary, a brick phone allowing voice calls and texts without internet access is allowed.
- From 1st January 2027, no pupils will be allowed to bring in a smartphone. If necessary, a brick phone can be brought in to school. For pupils in Year Nursery to Year 5 we are not expecting the need to bring in mobile phones of any type.
- Any phone that is brought in must be handed in upon arrival and will be stored securely by school staff and returned to the pupil when leaving. These phones will not be used during the school day and must be turned off whilst at school.
- If there is a medical reason why a child requires a smartphone, this must be discussed with the Head of School first.

We recognise that some older primary-aged children may walk to and from school independently and that families may wish them to have a means of communication. Where this is the case, children may bring a basic mobile phone that allows calls and texts only and does not have internet access, social media or app functionality. Such phones should be handed in to the school office at the start of the day and collected at the end.

We also recognise that a small number of children may require access to smartphone technology for specific medical or accessibility reasons. Where there is a legitimate need, appropriate exemptions will be considered on an individual basis.

Why Are We Making This Change?

Our decision is rooted in what we believe is best for children. We want to:

- Reduce distractions and support concentration on learning.
- Promote positive friendships and face-to-face social interaction.
- Protect children from exposure to inappropriate online content.
- Support children's mental health and wellbeing.
- Reduce pressure on families who may feel obliged to provide smartphones before they feel ready.
- Encourage a childhood rich in play, creativity, conversation and real-world experiences.

Importantly, this is not about telling families how to parent or dictating what children can and cannot have outside school. We recognise that every family is different and that decisions about technology are ultimately for parents and carers to make. However, many families tell us they feel significant social pressure to provide smartphones at an increasingly young age. By taking a collective federation approach, we hope to give families greater freedom to make choices that are right for their own children. This reflects a key message shared by schools that have already adopted smartphone-free policies.

Supporting Families

Alongside this commitment, we will continue to educate children about online safety, healthy technology habits and digital responsibility. We will also share information and resources with families to help navigate the challenges and opportunities presented by technology.

Families may wish to explore the resources available through the Smartphone Free Childhood movement, including information about alternative devices that provide communication without access to social media or the internet. This has been highlighted by other schools as a useful source of support for parents.

Working Together

At the Skylark Federation, we believe that childhood should be protected and celebrated. By working together as a community, we can help children develop confidence, character and strong relationships while reducing some of the pressures that modern technology can bring.

Thank you for your ongoing support and partnership.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Dean

Interim Executive Headteacher

Skylark Federation