Title	Mobile Phone and Device Use Policy
Purpose	To ensure a mobile phone-free environment that supports student learning, wellbeing, and safeguarding, whilst enabling essential staff communication and parental contact where necessary
Relevant to	Trustees, Local Governors, All Staff, Students, Families Whole School
Responsible Officer	Provision Manager
Introduced	10/26
Modification History	
Related Policies	B4 Behaviour Policy, A2 Accessibility Plan, BSET Pol.32 Safeguarding, B3 Assessment Recording and Reporting, E-safety and Acceptable Use Policy, Staff Code of Conduct
Date due for review	9/2027
Relevant subcommittee for review	
Approved by Local Governing Body	
Filed as	Mobile_phone_and_use_of_devices_policy OBR_V1_1026

This policy has due regard to legislation and statutory guidance, including, but not limited to, the following:

- DfE (2026) 'Mobile Phones in Schools'
- DfE (2025) 'Keeping Children Safe in Education'
- Equality Act 2010
- Data (Use and Access) Act 2025
- UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018

1. Introduction and Rationale

At Oakbridge Special Education, we are committed to providing a safe, respectful and supportive learning environment for all students. We recognise that many of our learners have additional needs and may require personalised approaches to support their communication, emotional regulation and wellbeing.

In line with government guidance, Oakbridge promotes a mobile phone-free learning environment to minimise distraction, support positive social interaction, protect wellbeing and maintain safeguarding standards. Any reasonable adjustments required by individual students will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

1.1 Definitions

For the purposes of this policy:
"Mobile phone" includes smartphones and any device capable of making calls, sending messages, or accessing the internet
"Device" includes tablets, smartwatches, smart glasses, and any other personal electronic device capable of recording, communication, or internet access
"Smartwatch" includes any wearable technology capable of recording, communication, photography, or internet access (e.g., Apple Watch, Samsung Galaxy Watch, Fitbit with communication features)
"Smart glasses" includes any wearable eyewear with recording, communication, or internet capabilities (e.g., Ray-Ban Meta Smart Glasses, Google Glass)
"College day" is defined as 9.00am–3.15pm
"Visitor" includes any person on the school site who is not a current student or staff member
"Regulation Support Plan" is a document that outlines strategies to support a student's emotional regulation and wellbeing. This is a standalone document developed in conjunction with parents/carers.

2. Default Position: Mobile Phone-Free Environment

Once the College Day begins, the default expectation is that Oakbridge remains a mobile phone-free environment to promote a calm and safe learning space.

For students, this means:

- Mobile phones and personal devices **including smartwatches and smart glasses** must not be used during the school day (9.00am–3.15pm)
- All devices must be stored securely in the college student reception office when not in use
- **Smartwatches with communication or recording features must be switched off and stored with other devices**
- **Smart glasses must not be worn or brought onto the school site**

For staff, this means:

- Personal mobile phones must be stored in allocated magnetic pouches during the college day
- **Smartwatches with communication features must be set to 'do not disturb' or similar mode during student contact time**
- **Smart glasses must not be worn during student contact time**
- Phones may only be unlocked during designated break times using magnetic unlock stations in the staff room and main reception.
- Personal phones must not be used during student contact, unless in emergencies with Provision Manager's permission

For visitors, this means:

- External staff will be expected to use a mobile phone pouch whilst on site
- Visitors must keep mobile phones on silent and must not use them in student areas without prior permission.
- **Smartwatches and smart glasses must not be used for recording or communication whilst on site**
- Exceptions will be made for whole college events (see section 5 below)

3. Student Use of Devices

3.1 General Expectations

All students are expected to follow the mobile phone-free environment policy. However, we recognise that some students may require access to devices for specific, essential purposes.

Smartwatches and Smart Glasses:

Students may wear basic fitness trackers (without communication, recording, or internet features) during the school day.

Smartwatches with communication or recording features are subject to the same rules as mobile phones and must be stored securely.

Smart glasses are not permitted on the college site due to safeguarding concerns around covert recording.

3.2 Essential Transactional Support for Transport

We define "essential transactional support" as the use of a device to facilitate safe travel, communication, and emotional regulation during the transition between home and college.

Under the Equality Act 2010, Oakbridge has a statutory duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled students. For some of our students, a mobile device is not a distraction but a necessary tool to manage their medical conditions or regulation or communication needs.

Students may be permitted to use their devices as transactional support during:

- On Transport: During the journey to and from college to support regulation and communication
- Start and End of the Day: During the immediate arrival at college and the period of departure (for example the transition from the bus to the class)

3.3 Storage and Supervision

Devices used for transactional support during transitions will be managed according to the student's individual needs—for example, being handed to staff or stored securely in the lockable cupboard in the student reception office once the student has successfully transitioned into the school building.

- Upon arrival at college, students with devices must hand their device in at student reception
- Devices will be stored securely in a locked cupboard in the student reception office
- Devices will be returned to students at the end of the college day before they board transport

Transport Staff: Staff on college transport are responsible for monitoring device use to ensure it remains a support tool rather than a source of distress or inappropriate content.

College Staff: Staff greeting students at the start of the day and supervising departures will provide oversight, ensuring devices are used appropriately for transition and then stored according to college protocols.

3.4 Filtering and Monitoring

The college maintains appropriate filtering and monitoring systems to safeguard students from harmful content while using college networks.

3.5 Consequences of Policy Breach

If a student is found using a mobile phone, smartwatch, or other device during the college day without permission:

First instance:

- Device will be confiscated and stored securely in the student reception office
- Device will be returned at the end of the day
- Staff will have a conversation with the student about expectations, using an emotion coaching approach

Repeated instances:

- Parents/carers will be contacted
- A meeting will be arranged to discuss support needs and reasonable adjustments
- The student's Behaviour Support Plan (if applicable) will be reviewed

Safeguarding concerns: If a device is being used in a way that raises safeguarding concerns (e.g., inappropriate content, cyberbullying, making or sharing nudes or semi-nudes), this will be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and handled in accordance with our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

3.6 Searching and Confiscation

Staff have the legal power to search students and confiscate items, including mobile phones, smartwatches, and other devices, in accordance with DfE guidance 'Searching, Screening and Confiscation' (2024).

Procedures: Searches will only be conducted where there is reasonable suspicion that a student has a prohibited item or is breaching college rules

- Searches will be conducted by a member of SLT with another staff member present as a witness
- The search will be conducted with respect for the student's dignity and privacy
- Parents/carers will be informed if a search takes place
- Confiscated devices will be stored securely in the student reception office and returned in accordance with section 3.5
- Any safeguarding concerns identified during a search will be reported immediately to the DSL

3.7 Lost or damaged devices:

While the college will take reasonable care to store devices securely, Oakbridge cannot accept liability for loss, theft, or damage to devices while in college storage. Devices are brought to college at the owner's risk.

The college recommends that valuable devices are insured by parents/carers.

3.8 Exceptions for Individual Student Needs

At Oakbridge, we recognise that some students may require access to devices during the college day as a reasonable adjustment under the Equality Act 2010. We will assess each request on an individual basis, considering the student's specific needs and circumstances.

Communication needs: Some students may require access to a device during the school day to support their communication. This might include:

- Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) apps
- Text-to-speech software
- Communication apps that support language development

Any student who requires access to a device for communication purposes will be:

- Assessed by the NHS Speech and Language Therapist (SaLT) and the college's communication lead
- Details of when, where, and how the device will be used should be included in the students' EHCP
- Supported by staff trained in the use of the specific communication technology

Regulation and emotional wellbeing needs: Some students may require access to a device during the college day to support their emotional regulation and wellbeing. This might include:

- Calming apps or videos
- Music or sensory apps
- Visual schedules or timers

Any student who requires access to a device for regulation purposes must have this detailed in their Behaviour Support Plan. The plan will specify:

- The specific apps or content the student can access
- When and where the device can be used (e.g., in a designated quiet space, during specific times of day)
- How staff will support the student to use the device appropriately
- Strategies to gradually reduce reliance on the device where appropriate

The Behaviour Support Plan will be developed in partnership with parents/carers, the student (where appropriate), and relevant professionals, and will be reviewed regularly.

Our goal is always to support students to engage fully in college life whilst recognising and responding to their individual needs. We will work in partnership with families and professionals to ensure that any use of devices during the college day is purposeful, supportive, and in the best interests of the student.

3.9 Emergency Contact

In the event that a student needs to contact their parent/carer during the school day for an emergency:

- The student should speak to a member of staff
- Staff will facilitate contact via the college office
- Students will not be permitted to use their personal devices for this purpose

4. Staff Use of Mobile Phones and Devices

4.1 Personal Mobile Phones and Devices

All staff entering the school will be given a mobile phone pouch to keep their personal device in, stored in their personal bag or locker.

During the college day (8.40am–3.50pm):

- Personal mobile phones must remain in the magnetic pouch
- Phones must be kept on silent
- Personal phones must not be used during student contact, unless in emergencies with Headteacher's permission
- **Smartwatches with communication features must be set to 'do not disturb' or similar mode.**
- **Smart glasses must not be worn during student contact time**

Emergency use:

In genuine emergencies (e.g., family emergency, urgent childcare issue), staff may request permission from the Provision Manager or a member of SLT to access their phone

- Staff should move to a private area away from students to make/receive emergency calls

During break times:

Staff may unlock their phones using the magnetic unlock stations located in:

- Staff room
- Main Reception

Phones must be returned to the magnetic pouch before returning to student contact time

At the end of the day: Staff may unlock their phones using the magnetic unlock stations after 3.50pm.

Exception: During staff training sessions between 3.15pm and 3.50pm, staff may be directed by SLT to unlock their phones if required for training purposes (e.g., accessing online training materials, completing digital forms).

4.2 Non-Compliance

Staff must uphold the highest standards of learning, care, and respect.
Non-compliance may result in:

- Informal discussion with line manager
- Formal disciplinary action in line with Trust procedures

4.3 Work-Related Device Use

Some staff require access to their mobile phone for work purposes on site, including:

- Class teachers
- Senior Leadership Team (SLT)
- Other staff as approved by the Provision Manager

Consent Process:

- Staff requiring work-related device use must complete the 'Work-Related Device Use Application Form' which will state that they are using their device for work purposes only
- The consent form will be approved by the provision manager. An email will be sent to confirm approval

Expectations for work-related use:

- Devices must only be used for work purposes (e.g., communication with parents, emergency contact, medical coordination)
- Staff must never use personal phones to take student photos; please use college iPads for trips/learning records and photos
- Staff must follow all safeguarding and data protection protocols
- Staff must not friend students or parents or discuss school matters on social media

Breach of work-related use:

- Any staff member found using their device for non-work purposes during student contact time will be subject to disciplinary procedures
- Serious breaches (e.g., inappropriate use, safeguarding concerns) will be escalated immediately

Use of Personal Devices for Music During Student Transitions:

Some staff may use their personal devices to play music to support a student's transition or emotional regulation. This is permitted only under the following conditions:

Approval required:

- Staff must have specific approval from the provision manager to use their personal device for this purpose
- This approval must be documented on the work-related device use consent form

Safeguarding requirements:

- The student must not be able to see the staff member's screen at any time
- The device must be positioned so that only audio is accessible to the student (e.g., device face-down, in staff member's pocket with wired headphones, or connected to a Bluetooth speaker)
- Music must be age-appropriate and suitable for the college environment
- Staff must ensure no notifications, messages, or other content can be seen or heard by students

Appropriate use:

- Music should be pre-selected and stored in a dedicated playlist to avoid the need to search or browse while with students
- Staff should use school-owned devices or Bluetooth speakers where possible
- Personal devices should only be used when school equipment is unavailable or impractical

Monitoring:

- Provision manager will monitor this use as part of regular supervision
- Any concerns about inappropriate content or safeguarding risks must be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead

Alternative provision:

- The college will work to provide school-owned devices (e.g., iPads, Bluetooth speakers) for this purpose to reduce reliance on staff personal devices
- Staff should request school equipment through the Provision Manager and Deputy Provision Manager where possible

5. Visitor and External Staff Use of Mobile Phones and Devices

5.1 External Staff Working with Students

To safeguard students and maintain a distraction-free learning environment, external professionals and temporary staff who work directly with students will be required to store their mobile phones in a phone pouch whilst on site.

This includes, but is not limited to:

- Speech and Language Therapists
- Physiotherapists
- Music Therapists
- Lunch Supervisors
- Volunteers
- Trial or Agency Staff
- Any other external professionals working closely with students

These individuals will be:

- Asked to place their mobile phone in a pouch upon signing in at reception
- Informed that smartwatches and smart glasses must not be used for recording, communication, or photography whilst on site
- Provided with a visitor or staff badge, where applicable
- Expected to keep their phone secured in the pouch for the duration of their time working with students
- Able to unlock their phone using the designated magnetic unlock stations in authorised areas if necessary and with permission from a member of staff

5.2 Visitors to the College

Visitors who are not working directly with students, such as parents/carers attending meetings or tours, contractors, delivery personnel, and other visitors, will be informed of Oakbridge's Mobile Phone and Device Policy upon arrival.
Visitors will be expected to:

- Keep mobile phones on silent mode whilst on site
- Keep mobile phones stored in a bag, pocket, or other secure location
- Refrain from using phones in student areas unless authorised by a member of staff
- Not take photographs, videos, or audio recordings on site without prior permission from the Provision Manager/ Deputy Provision Manager.

Oakbridge Special Education reserves the right to request that any visitor who does not comply with these expectations leaves the premises.

Safeguarding note: Smart glasses and other covert recording devices pose a particular safeguarding risk. Visitors wearing smart glasses will be asked to remove them or will not be permitted entry to the college site.

Please note that mobile/smart devices cannot be used to record meetings/conversations without the express permission of all participants.

5.3 Exceptions for Whole College Events

Exceptions will be made for whole College events such as:

- Family events
- Community events
- End-of-year performances

During these events, parents and carers will be able to bring their phones onto the college site and will be able to record their child's performance.

However, this permission comes with the strict provision that:

- Photos and videos taken at college events must not be posted anywhere on social media or online
- Photos and videos must be for personal use only
- Parents and carers must not take photos or videos of other children without their parents' permission

Smartwatches and smart glasses must not be used for recording at college events due to the difficulty in monitoring their use and the safeguarding risks they pose

Any breach of this provision may result in the parent/carer being asked to leave the event and may affect their ability to attend future college events

GDPR compliance:

- Parents and carers will be asked to sign a consent form regarding photography at college events when their son/daughter joins the college, and this will be reviewed annually
- Parents who do not wish their child to be photographed should notify the college office in advance of events

- The college will make reasonable efforts to ensure students whose parents have not given consent are not included in other parents' photographs (e.g., separate seating areas where practical)
- Parents and carers will be reminded of these expectations in advance of each event through letters, newsletters, and signage at the event itself.

5.4 Safeguarding Considerations

All visitors must:

- Report to the college main reception to sign in and produce photo ID
- Wear a visitor's badge at all times
- Be supervised appropriately according to their DBS status and the nature of their visit

Staff should alert the reception desk or a member of the Senior Leadership Team if they come across a visitor without a badge on the college site. Any concerns about student, staff, or visitor use of mobile phones or devices that relate to safeguarding must be reported immediately using CPOMS and to Kareen Linton (Designated Safeguarding Lead) or another member of the Senior Leadership Team.

6. Partnership with Parents and Carers

We believe in a partnership with parents to address the risks associated with high device use, such as "problematic use" or "addiction," which research confirms is significantly associated with worsened mental health, poor sleep, and lower attainment.

Our commitment to parents/carers:

Reducing Reliance: We will work with families through:

- Individual assessments and support plans for students with high device dependency
- Sharing resources and strategies to help students find the "right balance" between device use and other activities
- Signposting to external support services where appropriate

Education: We will provide:

- Guidance to parents on online safety through email communications, workshops, and the college website
- Information about the benefits of a phone-free environment during the core college day
- Updates on emerging digital risks and how to protect students
- Resources for managing device use at home

Consistent Communication:

- If parents need to contact their son/daughter during the college day, they should call the college office on 0203 026 0611
- The office will ensure messages are passed to students promptly
- In emergencies, office staff will facilitate immediate contact
- Parents should not attempt to contact students directly on personal devices during the college day

7. Safeguarding and Online Safety

All staff should be aware of systems within their college which support safeguarding, and these should be explained to them as part of staff induction.

This policy supports our safeguarding responsibilities by:

- Reducing opportunities for cyberbullying, inappropriate content sharing, and online harm during the school day
- Ensuring staff and visitors model appropriate digital behaviour
- Protecting students from distraction and supporting their emotional regulation
- Maintaining clear boundaries between personal and professional use of technology
- Protecting the privacy and dignity of all students through controlled use of photography and recording at college events

Data Protection:

- Any images or recordings taken on college devices must be stored securely in accordance with our Data Protection Policy
- Personal devices must not be used to store student data or images
- Any breach of data protection relating to mobile phone or device use will be reported to the Data Protection Officer and may result in disciplinary action

All staff have a responsibility to provide a safe environment in which students can learn. All staff should be able to reassure victims that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe.

Any concerns about student, staff, or visitor use of mobile phones or devices that relate to safeguarding must be reported immediately using CPOMS and to the **Designated Safeguarding Lead:** Kareen Linton – kareen.linton@bsentrust.org or Simon Clark – simon.clark@oakbridgesen.org

8. Roles and Responsibilities

8.1 The Local Governing Body

The Local Governing Body is responsible for:

- Approving and monitoring this policy
- Ensuring the policy complies with all relevant legislation
- Reviewing the policy annually

8.2 The Provision Manager

The Provision Manager is responsible for:

- Implementing this policy consistently throughout the college
- Ensuring all staff understand and implement the policy
- Publishing the policy on the college website **and making it available free of charge to anyone who requests it**
- **Ensuring the policy is published in an accessible format**
- Reporting to governors on the effectiveness of the policy
- Communicating expectations to parents and visitors

8.3 The Deputy Provision Manager

The Deputy Provision Manager is responsible for:

- Day-to-day implementation of the policy
- Reviewing and approving student requests for device use on transport
- Coordinating staff training on the policy, which will include:
- Understanding the rationale and legal basis for the policy
- Procedures for confiscation and secure storage of devices
- How to support students with approved device use
- Recognising and responding to safeguarding concerns related to device use
- Understanding reasonable adjustments for SEND students
- Emotion coaching approaches when addressing policy breaches
- Monitoring compliance and addressing breaches

8.4 All Staff

All staff are responsible for:

- Following this policy at all times
- Modelling appropriate digital behaviour
- Supervising students' use of devices where approved
- Reporting any concerns or breaches

- Ensuring visitors are aware of and comply with this policy

8.5 Reception and Office Staff

Reception and office staff are responsible for:

- Explaining the mobile phone policy to all visitors upon arrival
- Providing mobile phone pouches to external staff
- Ensuring visitors sign in and receive appropriate badges
- Monitoring compliance with visitor protocols

9. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Deputy Provision Manager in consultation with staff, students, parents/carers, and governors.

The effectiveness of the policy will be monitored through:

- Staff feedback
- Student and parent feedback
- Incident reports
- Observations of compliance
- Review of any breaches at college events

10. Conclusion

This policy seeks to empower our students by recognising their unique needs for transactional support while following evidence-based research that moves beyond simple bans toward a comprehensive, supervised, and supportive framework.

By maintaining a mobile phone-free environment, we aim to create a calm, focused, and safe learning space for all students, whilst ensuring staff can fulfil their professional responsibilities effectively and safely. We also aim to protect the privacy and dignity of all members of our college community through appropriate use of photography and recording at college events.

11. Implementation Timeline

This policy will be implemented as follows:

October 2026:

- Staff Training

- Policy distributed to staff/ put on website
- Work related device use form distributed
- Mobile phone pouches distributed to staff
- Magnetic unlock stations installed in staffroom and main reception

November 2026:

- Review of initial implementation
- Feedback gathered from staff, students, and parents/carers
- Adjustments made as necessary

Ongoing:

- New staff receive policy training during induction
- Annual review and update cycle

12. Appendices

Appendix A: Staff Work-Related Device Use Consent Form (Microsoft Form link)

- For staff requiring mobile phone access for work purposes:

Work-Related Device Use Application Form – Fill in form

13. Frequently Asked Questions

For Parents/Carers:

Q: What if my son/daughter needs to contact me urgently during the college day?
A: Students should speak to a member of staff who will facilitate contact via the college office. Urgent messages will be passed on as quickly as possible.

Q: How can I contact my son/daughter during the college day?
A: If you need to pass on an urgent message, please contact the college office. Staff will ensure the message is passed to the student promptly.

Q: My son/daughter uses their phone for communication or accessibility purposes. Will they still have access to it?
A: Yes. Where a mobile device forms part of a student's agreed communication, assistive technology, medical, or accessibility provision, arrangements will be made to ensure they can continue to access the support they require.

For Staff:

Q: What if I need to contact my childminder during the day?
A: You may unlock your phone during break times using the magnetic unlock stations. For genuine emergencies, seek permission from the Headteacher or SLT.

Q: I'm a class teacher - do I need to keep my phone in a pouch?
A: If you require your phone for work purposes (e.g., contacting parents, emergency communication), you must complete the work-related device use consent form. Once approved, you may keep your phone accessible but must only use it for work purposes.

Q: What if a student refuses to hand over their phone?
A: Follow the procedures in section 3.5 and 3.6. Contact SLT for support if needed. Never physically remove a device from a student.

Q: Can I use my phone to take photographs of students for evidence of learning?
A: No. Only college-approved devices may be used to take photographs, videos, or recordings of students.