HOLMEWOOD HOUSE SCHOOL

'Kindness, aspiration & self-belief'

USE OF PERSONAL SMART TECHNOLOGY INCLUDING MOBILE PHONES

Where we reference 'staff' in this policy, this applies to everyone who comes into contact with children on this site, including peripatetic teachers, visitors, contractors and those facilitating activities.

Policy Holder	Assistant Head Pastoral Care & DSL
Date Approved	March 2026
Governor Approval	SLT
Date for next review	March 2027

This policy should be reviewed in conjunction with:

- Online Safety Policy
- Cyberbullying Policy
- Acceptable Use of Technology Policies

RATIONALE

The School recognises that mobile phones, cameras (including on glasses), smart watches and digital devices are now an integral part of our culture and can be of considerable value, particularly in relation to personal safety and health.

We are however, very aware of the possible dangers of the misuse of technology, specifically wearable devices. This policy therefore aims to provide guidance to staff, pupils, parents and visitors. It aims to do this ensuring privacy is protected, online safety is preserved, and valuable equipment is looked after appropriately.

With the evolution of mobile and wearable technology including camera facilities as standard, it is of the upmost importance that the way we deal with mobile phones and wearable devices in school, is planned for.

This policy has been drafted with considerations from the Online Safety Act, 2025, which is designed to protect those under 18 from being able to access inappropriate online content on any devices and places the emphasis on online platforms to put measures in place to verify the ages of users without storing personal information. Whilst this act places the onus on platform providers to put in place measures to ensure that under age users are not able to access inappropriate or dangerous content, as a School we do not allow any smart devices, including phones, tablets (unless for educational purposes) and smart watches to be bought on site by pupils to mitigate the risk of inappropriate content being accessed by pupils or to reduce the effectiveness of the education provided.

USE OF PERSONAL MOBILE DEVICES

Personal smart technology should never be used to take, store online content or upload photographs or videos of children.

Personal mobile devices / phones should not generally be needed or used by staff, except as set out in the guidelines below.

- Staff use of mobile phones and wearable devices during their working day should be appropriate, only during non-contact time and not in the presence of children.
- Use of mobile devices should be in keeping with professional responsibilities and expectations.
- Mobile devices should not be used during lesson times and must be stored securely out of sight.
- To minimise distraction, notifications should be disabled and devices placed in silent mode.
- Smart watches and Fitbits are permitted to be worn by staff but to be used only in 'airplane' mode when working with children. Therefore, other functions, **especially cameras** must be disabled when staff are with the children. This is particularly the case where children are in EYFS due to the heightened risk for younger children.
- Should staff need to use their personal device/phone in an emergency and in the presence of children (e.g. awaiting a call about an unwell family member), this must be agreed in advance with the DSL. If for any reason the phone was used in an emergency without prior consent, this must be reported to the DSL so it can be logged. This is to avoid any misinterpretation.
- No photographs, videos or images of children should be captured, stored or uploaded using a personal mobile device / phone in any setting.
- Staff should never use their personal phones or smart devices to take photographs of pupils or allow themselves to be photographed by pupils.
- Staff should never contact pupils or parents via their own personal mobile number and should not give their mobile phone number to any pupils. This also includes past pupils under the age of 18 years.
- The school is aware that some staff members are also parents at the school; at all times staff should remain professional in their communications.
- Games staff may use their mobile phones during games sessions and when responsible for children away from school, but only to communicate arrangements to parents or colleagues, the School office or for emergency purposes. It is also permitted to use personal devices to complete registers on SOCS.
- Personal devices may be used as timers during games lessons/ matches.
- There are 2 school trip mobile phones which can be booked out for use during on or off-site educational visits/ activities. These are located in the Bursary.
- Where necessary, the Group Leader of an educational visit may use their own mobile phone when off-site only when communicating with colleagues, the School office or emergency services.
- Other staff members on the trip or offsite should carry their mobile phones so they can communicate with colleagues when necessary or in an emergency.
- JB staff may only use their mobile phones in an emergency. For most circumstances, they should use the walkie talkies to contact the person on duty at the front desk should they need help. Only if they cannot get through to the person on duty should they use their mobile phone to contact accompanying colleagues, a member of SLT or the emergency services.
- Regular spot checks in respect of the guidelines in this policy will be undertaken by the DSL or SLT.

EYFS

The school recognises that there are more potential hazards in the use of mobile phones in the Early Years and Foundation Stage. Due to the nature of EYFS children being in the Pre-Prep building the guidance below applies to all staff in the pre-prep location. Therefore, the following guidance is applicable.

- Early Years and Foundation Stage staff **MUST** keep their mobile phones in a secure locked place away from the children. In the Nursery and Pre-Nursery, mobile phones are to be kept in a locked cabinet in the Nursery staffroom. Reception class staff will keep their phones in a locked cabinet inside their classroom cupboard.
- Should staff need to use their phone in an emergency during sessions, they may make and take calls in the staffroom. This must be reported to the Head of the Early Years and recorded on the 'Record of the Use of Personal Mobile Phones in the Early Years' log. This is only for calls taken in the Early Years Department, staff are free to check their phones in the staff room, during breaks.
- EYFS staff are provided with an encrypted and password protected school tablet to be able to record events throughout the day. Staff use of these devices is in accordance with the Acceptable Use Policy. They are managed and maintained by the IT department and DSL team who carry out spot checks to ensure the devices are being used correctly, in line with this policy.
- Smart watches and Fitbits are permitted to be worn by staff but to be used only as a watch when working with children. Therefore, other functions, especially cameras must be disabled when staff are with the children. This is particularly the case in EYFS due to the heightened risk for younger children.

BOARDING STAFF

Boarding staff are required to follow the same procedures as day staff.

If boarding staff are out on the grounds with boarders, they should have a walkie talkie with them to alert another member of staff of any issues.

USE OF SCHOOL MOBILE PHONES

The school has a number of mobile phones/tablets/ipads for use by staff. The following table shows where those devices are kept.

Department	Owner/Location
Marketing	Marketing manager
Maintenance	Operations manager
IT Department	IT staff
Educational trips	Bursary safe

MINIBUSES

Mobile phones may be used as a GPS device. However, calls should be made:

- only in an emergency
- when stationary and in a safe location

If a driver has to stop and wait for any reason while there are pupils on the bus, the driver cannot use their mobile phone other than to communicate with parents or the School office should arrangements need to change, or with the emergency services.

Smart watches and Fitbits are permitted to be worn by staff but to be used only in 'airplane' mode when working with children. Therefore, other functions, especially cameras must be disabled when staff are with the children. This is particularly the case where children are in EYFS due to the heightened risk for younger children.

VOLUNTEERS, VISITORS, CONTRACTORS, PERIPATETICS (INCLUDING LAMDA, MUSIC, SPORT, HEALTH)

Volunteers, visitors and contractors, peripatetic professionals (including LAMDA, Music, Sport, Health) must adhere to this policy if on site during the school day.

They must:

- Not take photos or recordings of pupils.
- Not use phones/ devices when working with children.
- Smart watches and Fitbits are permitted to be worn but should be used only as a watch when working with children. Therefore, other functions, especially cameras must be disabled when staff are with the children. This is particularly the case in EYFS due to the heightened risk for younger children.
- Keep mobile devices / phones on silent when at school.
- Not use phones to make calls where pupils are present; make a staff member aware if the need to use a mobile arises when they can then be escorted to an appropriate place away from pupils.

It is understood that self-employed professionals may have the contact details of parents; any arrangements made directly with parents must be kept appropriate and professional.

Volunteers, visitors and contractors, peripatetic professionals will be made aware of this policy and the expectations for mobile phone/device use when arriving at school and they sign to acknowledge understanding.

USE OF MOBILE PHONES BY PUPILS

This part of the policy reflects DfE guidance 'Mobile Phones in Schools', January 2026

Holmewood House is a phone free school for Pupils. We feel that there is no need for the children to have their phones in school at all. If for reasons of safety your child needs a phone to communicate with you about their journey home from school, we advise parents to give your child a basic phone. We want all of the children to be able to devote themselves to their studies, free from any distractions.

Mobile phones or smart watches that record video, take photos or can receive or send messages/calls are not allowed in school. This is because they are a safeguarding risk as well as a distraction that interrupts learning. We ask that parents support the school by not allowing children to bring smart watches / mobiles into school. We ask parents to communicate this messaging on a regular basis to their children.

If a child needs to contact a parent or guardian, they can do so swiftly from the school office. Similarly, if a message needs to be conveyed from a parent to a child, the school office will take these calls and pass the necessary information on promptly. If parents feel there is a valid reason that a child needs to bring a phone to school, permission should be sought from the Assistant Head Pastoral, to enable the school to safeguard all children. Please click here to complete the form.

Children who use minibus or taxi transport may bring phones to school to enable them to contact parents or carers regarding travel arrangements or pick-ups. They are not to be used whilst on minibuses or travelling in taxis. Children are responsible for the content on their phones at all times.

All phones or smart watches that are brought into school must be named and should be handed in to Reception first thing in the morning, before anything else, where they are kept securely area. At the end of the day, they are returned to the correct owner. The school will maintain a list of pupils who are expected to drop off their phones to enable a check to be completed each day.

During residential trips there may be amendments to the policy where limited usage, with appropriate rules and supervision may be allowed. This would always be communicated to parents and pupils prior to the trip to aid understanding.

BOARDING PUPILS

Boarding pupils are not encouraged to bring mobile phones to School but we do accept that a number of pupils need to contact their families during the evening and weekends.

Phones/Devices are for personal use. They must not be lent to others who may misuse them. Owners are responsible for any use to which their phones/devices are put. Given the access to personal information via services on a mobile device, all phones/devices must be secured with a password or pin code known only to the owner, or other security systems such as biometric activation. All members of the Boarding Community are encouraged to consider their use of mobile phones/devices and to minimise the effect this may have on their interactions with others, their own personal safety and the interests of others.

The School's use of Digital Learning via Bring Your Own Device (BYOD), and the use of keyboard-enabled devices, means that mobile phones are not needed in lessons. Any member of staff who confiscates a phone should return it to the Houseparent with a brief note of explanation as soon as possible.

Pupils will be advised of allotted times at which they may use their phone or device in the boarding house. Pupils will not have access to their mobile phones or other devices after bed time.

Phones/devices must not be used by voice or text to communicate any abusive, impolite or otherwise inappropriate messages or pictures. It is also forbidden to visit sites, view or download images otherwise prohibited by School policy, or to take or send pictures, video or audio recordings of another person without his or her consent. Pupils are forbidden to bring into School, any harmful material that may have been previously downloaded. Downloading harmful content via 3, 4, 5G or VPN that may bypass the school's filtering and monitoring systems is not permitted. Spot checks are carried out. Any such instances will lead to disciplinary action.

Flexi or casual boarders are also expected to adhere to these policy guidelines when boarding.

For clarity, devices in this policy refer to laptops, iPads, smartwatches, tablets, digital cameras etc.

MISUSE

If a pupil is found to have a mobile phone on them without permission during the school day, they will be subject to a sanction as deemed appropriate by The Assistant Head Pastoral or Deputy Head. If it is suspected that a child has an unauthorised device on them, they may be subject a having their bag or locker checked, following the 'Searching, screening and confiscation in schools' guidance regarding searching a pupil.

Any member of staff found to misuse a mobile phone or smart device will be subject to disciplinary action in line with the disciplinary procedure.

It is everybody's responsibility to enforce this policy, therefore any misuse of devices in any school area should be reported to the DSL in line with the safeguarding and whistleblowing policies and procedures.

EXEMPTIONS

Whilst we prohibit the use of mobile phones throughout the school day to reduce distraction and disruption, we must comply with other legal duties such as the duty to make reasonable adjustments where necessary. There may be other exceptional circumstances where we may consider making adaptations to this policy for specific pupils.

For example, Schools have a duty under the Equality Act 2010 to take such steps as is reasonable to avoid substantial disadvantage to a disabled pupil caused by the school's policies or practices. Allowing a disabled pupil access to their mobile phone during the school day, where it is necessary due to the nature of their disability, may be considered a reasonable adjustment and a failure to do so may be a breach of the school's duty.

Under the Children and Families Act 2014 schools should have arrangements in place to support pupils with medical conditions. In meeting this duty, supporting a pupil with their medical condition can involve the use of a mobile phone. For example, pupils with diabetes might use continuous glucose monitoring with a sensor linked to their mobile phone to monitor blood sugar levels. Where mobile phone use allows pupils to manage their medical condition effectively, it would not be reasonable for us to prevent this.

Beyond these specific duties, schools should recognise that a need for mobile phone access for some pupils may depend on their individual circumstances, including at home. As a school, we allow flexibility in our policy for these pupils. If it is agreed that a phone can be brought into school, following completion of the relevant form, the phone should be given to reception immediately upon arrival at school.

Allowing flexibility for individual pupils does not mean that these pupils should be exempt from all restrictions on the use of their mobile phone. It may be appropriate to enable pupils to use their mobile phone for a specific purpose at specific times and locations, for example in a Head of Year's office.

LOSS, THEFT OR DAMAGE

The School accepts no responsibility for mobile phones that are lost, damaged or stolen on school premises or transport, during school visits or trips, or during travel to and from school.
Any found mobiles or devices will be handed in to the school office where it can be collected by the owner.

September 2025 – updated with new Government Guidance Feb 2026