Phoenix Arch School

Kind, Curious, Creative and Collaborative

Mobile Phone and Smart Device Policy

2026–27

School	Phoenix Arch School
Policy owner	Headteacher / Designated Safeguarding Lead
DSL	Falu Mehta
Deputy DSLs	Lennie Sarkis and Luana Oancea
Approval	Governing Body – September 2026
Review date	September 2027, or sooner if statutory guidance changes

1 Purpose and scope

Phoenix Arch School provides a safe, therapeutic and inclusive environment for primary pupils with autism and additional needs. This policy sets expectations for personal phones and smart devices so pupils can communicate, learn and travel safely. It applies to pupils, staff, volunteers, parents, visitors and contractors on site, during school activities and, through agreed arrangements with providers, on school transport. It implements the phone-free school day set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 (KCSIE), paragraph 170, and the DfE statutory mobile phone guidance.

Phoenix Arch School follows the Brent PHONE Pledge (Protect, Help, Observe, Nurture and Educate). We use it to guide safe, purposeful use of smart technology, support families, teach responsible online behaviour and review our approach.

Personal smartphones and smart devices should remain at home. Pupils must not have access to personal mobile phones or smart devices throughout the school day, including lessons, transitions, breaks and lunchtime. The same rule applies to clubs and school visits. Any exception must be individually authorised, risk assessed and recorded. A basic phone for an assessed independent travel need requires prior written approval from the Headteacher. A personal device brought to school must be handed to the office or designated staff member for secure storage unless the written plan provides otherwise.

2 Devices covered

This policy covers smartphones, basic mobile phones, smartwatches, smart glasses and personal devices capable of messaging, accessing online content or recording sound or images. Personal entertainment tablets brought on transport are subject to the same safety arrangements.

School managed teaching devices and agreed augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) aids are used under the school's acceptable use and safeguarding arrangements. Ear defenders and other agreed sensory equipment remain available. Any device needed for disability access or a medical condition is considered individually.

3 Responsibilities

The governing board approves this policy and reviews its impact on safeguarding and inclusion. The Headteacher oversees implementation and written exceptions. The SENCO coordinates individual adjustments with families and professionals. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) manages safeguarding concerns. All staff apply the policy calmly and consistently. Families check what their child brings and share any need for an exception before use begins.

4 Smartphones and safety on school transport

Pupils bringing or using smartphones on the bus can cause distress and dysregulation among other pupils. Unexpected sounds, flashing images, unsuitable content, filming, disputes over devices or difficulty stopping an activity may escalate quickly in a confined vehicle. Where this affects safe supervision, puts a pupil at risk or distracts the driver, it becomes a safeguarding concern.

Families must keep personal smartphones and entertainment devices at home unless an individual exception has been agreed. For an approved device on arranged transport, the parent or carer hands it directly to the driver or escort before boarding, where the parent or carer is present. For pupils who board unaccompanied, agree a supervised handover with the transport team in advance so that the driver or escort holds the device during the journey. The device is kept off and securely stowed except as required by the individual plan or for an emergency. Pupils must not film, photograph, share screens, play audio aloud, message or make calls except as specified in their plan or directed by an adult in an emergency.

Where a device is needed for medical monitoring, communication or assessed regulation support, its plan must specify safe settings, permitted content, adult support and how other pupils will be protected. Alerts necessary for medical safety must remain active. Headphones may be considered only where assessed as safe and compatible with the pupil hearing essential instructions.

The school will agree practical procedures with the local authority transport team and operator, including secure carriage, handovers and incident reporting. Transport staff must receive the relevant information before an exception begins. The school does not assume transport staff have school staff search or confiscation powers.

If device use causes distress, the escort should use familiar communication and de-escalation strategies, ask for use to stop and follow the agreed transport plan. Staff must avoid grabbing a device or escalating a confrontation. Where safe, the device may be handed voluntarily to an adult for secure storage under the operator's procedure. A driver must stop in a safe place if the journey cannot continue safely. Immediate danger requires emergency services.

The operator reports incidents promptly to the school and follows its own procedures. School staff record serious incidents on CPOMS the same day. Report any safeguarding concern immediately to the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) or a deputy (DDSL) and record it promptly on CPOMS. Recording does not replace speaking directly to the DSL or DDSL. The school liaises with the family and transport team to review risks before the next journey and jointly reviews repeated incidents. Transport eligibility or suspension is a matter for the commissioning authority.

5 Arrival and collection

Any device to be stored at school must be labelled and handed to the office or designated staff member on arrival, by the driver or escort where applicable. Staff record receipt and store it in an agreed locked location. At dismissal, return it to the parent, carer, driver, escort or agreed responsible adult, with a recorded handover. Return to a pupil travelling independently only as set out in the approved travel plan.

Families should contact the school office through published school channels during the day. Staff will help pupils communicate with home when necessary. Parents must not call or message a pupil's personal device during school hours.

6 Individual needs and reasonable adjustments

The school will meet its duties under the Equality Act 2010 and its duties to support pupils with medical conditions. A phone or connected device may be essential for glucose monitoring, AAC or another disability-related need. Maintain essential access while arrangements are agreed. A location tracker, such as an AirTag, may be considered as part of an individual safety plan where a pupil is at risk of leaving supervision. It requires prior Headteacher authorisation, a documented safeguarding and data protection risk assessment, and agreed use and review arrangements. Staff continue to follow the pupil's supervision plan.

The Headteacher and SENCO will consider requests with the family and, where appropriate, the pupil, relevant clinicians and transport staff. The decision must consider the pupil's EHCP, individual healthcare plan, communication and sensory needs, and the impact on other pupils. A general preference for entertainment does not automatically establish an exception. An assessed regulation need requires a planned response and suitable support.

The written plan records the purpose, device, permitted functions, times and locations, supervision, storage, handovers, emergency arrangements and review date. Restrictions must allow the approved purpose to work. Where change is needed, staff use familiar visuals and a supported transition. An essential adjustment must not be withdrawn as a punishment.

7 Responding to breaches and safeguarding concerns

If a pupil becomes distressed, follow their individual support plan. Use a familiar adult, calm tone, minimal language and the pupil's communication system. Allow processing time, offer a regulation activity and use the least restrictive safe response. Record serious incidents on CPOMS the same day and inform families as required by the Behaviour and Regulation Policy. When it is safe, explain what will happen next and ask the pupil to hand over any unauthorised device for secure storage.

Any confiscation must be lawful, proportionate and recorded, including the reason, storage location and return arrangements. Consider travel and medical safety before retaining a device beyond the day. Searches may be undertaken only by the Headteacher or authorised staff, within current law and DfE guidance, with the required safeguards and parent notification. Staff must not use force solely to search for a phone banned under school rules.

Report any safeguarding concern immediately to the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) or a deputy (DDSL) and record it promptly on CPOMS. Recording does not replace speaking directly to the DSL or DDSL. This includes bullying, harmful content, covert recording, exploitation and threats. Staff must not routinely browse devices, demand account access or delete possible evidence. Examination of data must be authorised, necessary and lawful under current DfE guidance.

If nude or sexual images of children may be involved, secure the device and seek immediate DSL or DDSL advice. Staff must not view, copy, forward or print suspected images or ask a pupil to show them. The DSL will arrange support, protect evidence and seek advice from police or children's social care as appropriate.

8 Staff use and professional boundaries

Staff must keep personal phones silent and locked in a staff locker or leave them securely at reception. Personal phones must stay out of classrooms unless the Headteacher has agreed an individual exception in advance, with safeguards. Personal use is limited to the staffroom during breaks or outside school hours, away from pupils.. Never use personal devices to photograph, film or record pupils or staff, store pupil information or contact pupils or families.

Use a school mobile phone for emergency contact on educational visits, in line with the visit risk assessment. In an emergency, summon help without delay and report any exceptional use of a personal device to the Headteacher and DSL or DDSL as appropriate.

9 Visitors and school events

Parents, visitors, volunteers and contractors must keep devices silent and put away around pupils. Calls should be taken in a staff directed area away from pupils. Recording through smart glasses or other wearable devices is prohibited on site unless expressly authorised for a defined school purpose.

Parents, carers and visitors must not photograph, film or audio-record school events. School photography and recording must be planned, with consent obtained and Headteacher oversight, using approved school equipment. The DSL or DDSL will coordinate any additional safeguarding arrangements for individual pupils. Visitors who need a device for disability or medical reasons should agree arrangements with the office.

10 Information security and property

School devices must be protected by access controls and used only by authorised people. School records and images must be handled through approved systems, with access limited to those who need it. Report a lost device, unauthorised recording or suspected data breach promptly to the Headteacher and the school's data protection contact.

Phoenix Arch uses London Grid for Learning (LGfL) filtering and monitoring on school networks and school-managed devices. Filtering helps block harmful or inappropriate content. Monitoring helps staff identify and respond to potential online safety concerns. Staff follow the E-Safety Policy for responding to alerts, reporting gaps in protection and reviewing how well filtering and monitoring work. An approved personal device using mobile data may bypass school network filtering. The written plan must address connectivity and supervision while preserving essential access.

The school takes reasonable care of devices placed in its custody and records any loss or damage. Families are encouraged to avoid sending valuable devices. Responsibility for any loss or damage will be considered on the facts and under applicable law. This policy does not exclude legal liability.

11 Healthy screen use and regulation

At Phoenix Arch, staff plan purposeful, supervised screen use for learning, communication and agreed individual support. Staff reduce avoidable recreational screen time by using practical, play-based, outdoor and sensory activities and planning screen breaks. Pupils retain access to AAC, assistive technology and medical monitoring according to their individual plans.

Some families describe persistent difficulty stopping recreational screen use as ‘screen addiction’. Staff describe what they observe, such as repeated distress at stopping or screen use repeatedly taking time away from sleep, play or learning. Consider the pupil’s communication, sensory and regulation needs and discuss patterns with families and the SENCO.

Use consistent routines, a visual timer or now-and-next board, a clear warning and an accessible alternative before ending recreational screen use. Encourage families to try predictable screen-free times, especially before bed, and share approaches that work at home and school. Follow the safeguarding reporting route where there is a risk of harm.

12 Implementation and review

At the start of every half term, pupils revisit E-Safety through class lessons and assemblies. Staff adapt teaching to pupils’ developmental and communication needs using visuals, modelling and AAC where appropriate. Through workshops, parents and carers learn how to support safe online activity, manage recreational screen time and report concerns.

The school monitors incidents, adjustments, transport concerns and feedback. Families can raise policy concerns with the Headteacher and then use the school complaints procedure. Report concerns about an adult’s conduct directly to the Headteacher under the managing allegations or low-level concerns procedure. If the concern is about the Headteacher, report it to the Chair of Governors. Alert the DSL or DDSL immediately to any risk to a pupil.

13 Related documents and sources

Read alongside the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Behaviour and Regulation Policy, E-Safety Policy, Staff Handbook and Induction Guide, Staff Acceptable Use Agreement and relevant medical, data protection, educational visit and transport arrangements.

National guidance

DfE statutory guidance on mobile phones in schools

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 (September edition)

DfE guidance on searching, screening and confiscation

DfE announcement on strengthened phone-free school guidance

Government guidance for families on reducing screen time for under-fives

Government call for evidence on screen use by children aged 5 to 16

Brent Council's PHONE Pledge letter to families

The under-fives guidance is for families with younger children, including pupils under five. The call for evidence describes planned guidance for ages 5 to 16. The school's approach above sets out how we reduce avoidable recreational screen use in school.

Also have regard to the Equality Act 2010 and the current DfE guidance on supporting pupils at school with medical conditions.

Appendix Individual device agreement

Complete for every approved pupil device. Attach relevant healthcare, communication or transport plans. Share only the information necessary with staff and transport partners.

Pupil name and class	
Parent or carer and contact	
Device and identifying details	
Reason and assessed need	
Relevant plans and professional advice	
Permitted functions and restrictions	
Times and locations of use	
Supervising adults and support	
Transport arrangements including content settings and impact on other pupils	
Storage and recorded handovers	
Medical alerts and emergency arrangements	
Transition support and alternatives	
Start date and review date	
Headteacher approval and date	
Parent or carer agreement and date	
Pupil views recorded in an accessible way	
Staff and transport partners briefed by whom and when	

The school and family will review this agreement if needs or risks change. Any change must preserve access required for communication, disability support or medical safety.