



SMARTPHONE-FREE SCHOOL PROCEDURE

Effective 1 September 2026

Procedure owner	Deputy Head Pastoral, under the authority of the Head
Approved by	The Head
Effective from	1 September 2026
Applies to	All pupils in Years 7–13, including boarders; relevant provisions also apply to staff, parents and visitors
Review	During 2026–27 and thereafter annually or following material statutory/regulatory change
Related controlling policy	IT Acceptable Use & Mobile Phones Policy & Behaviour and Discipline Policy, September 2026

2026/27 procedure update summary

Area	Final September 2026 position	Update
Statutory basis	Procedure aligned to DfE statutory guidance effective for schools from 1 September 2026.	Consultation draft finalised.
Years 7–11	Smartphones should not be brought to School; registered basic phones may be carried for travel and remain off/stored during the School day.	Registration process clarified.
Sixth Form	Limited smartphone use permitted only at specifically designated times and in specifically designated Sixth Form locations; use in front of younger pupils is not permitted.	Final consultation decision incorporated.
Boarders	Same smartphone-free expectations during the teaching day; appropriate access outside it under boarding arrangements.	Cross-reference strengthened.
Sanctions	Confiscation and centralised Refocus/other proportionate sanctions aligned to Behaviour and Discipline Policy and Promoting Positive Behaviour Framework.	Operational timetable not hard-coded.



Trips and fixtures	Day trips normally mirror the School day; residential trips normally mirror boarding arrangements; trip leaders may set specific restrictions.	Educational Visits cross-reference clarified.
Wearables and recording	Smartwatches, smart glasses, AI-enabled wearables and comparable connected/recording devices explicitly covered.	Updated technology scope.
Parents and visitors	Unauthorised recording of meetings prohibited; event/fixture photography governed by safeguarding, consent and event-specific arrangements.	Consultation point resolved.
Procedure structure	Main sections and operative provisions use hierarchical numbering.	Brought into line with controlled-policy format.

1. Procedure statement

- 1.1 From 1 September 2026, Westonbirt School will operate as a smartphone-free school.
- 1.2 Our intention is straightforward: pupils should be able to learn, socialise, participate in school life and develop independence without the distraction, interruption and social pressures associated with continual access to smartphones and connected personal technology.
- 1.3 This procedure has been developed having regard to the Department for Education's statutory guidance Mobile phones in schools, which became statutory on 29 June 2026 and which schools should follow from 1 September 2026.
- 1.4 The statutory guidance expects schools to prohibit pupil access to mobile phones throughout the school day, including lessons, movement between lessons, breaktimes and lunchtimes. Westonbirt has chosen to go further by becoming a smartphone-free school, while recognising the legitimate need of some pupils to communicate when travelling independently to and from School.

2. Our core principle

- 2.1 For day pupils in Years 7–11, smartphones should not be brought to School.
- 2.2 Where a pupil or family considers a phone necessary for travel to and from School, the pupil may bring an approved basic phone capable principally of telephone calls and SMS text messaging. The device must be registered with the School in advance using the published Basic Phone Registration Form.
- 2.3 Registration does not permit use during the School day. The basic phone must be switched off, stored securely in the pupil's bag, locker or other designated location, neither seen nor heard, and not used until the pupil has completed the School day and is leaving the School environment.
- 2.4 Separate, limited arrangements for Sixth Form pupils and boarders are set out in sections 8 and 7 respectively.

3. What counts as a smartphone?

- 3.1 For the purpose of this procedure, a smartphone includes any personally owned mobile telephone capable of accessing apps, social media, internet services or other advanced connected functions beyond ordinary telephone calls and SMS messaging.
- 3.2 This includes devices operating through Wi-Fi even where they do not contain a SIM card or active mobile-data contract.
- 3.3 The School will determine whether a particular device falls within the permitted category. Where there is uncertainty, parents should seek approval before the device is brought to School.

4. Basic phones

- 4.1 An appropriate basic or 'brick' phone would normally make and receive telephone calls and SMS text messages, while having no social-media applications, app store, unrestricted web browser, advanced messaging applications such as WhatsApp or Snapchat, or other functionality that effectively turns it into a smartphone.
- 4.2 The School may publish separate parent guidance giving examples of suitable devices.

- 4.3** A basic phone remains a mobile phone for the purposes of the statutory guidance and consequently must not be accessed during the School day.

5. Wearable and connected technology

- 5.1** The procedure applies not only to smartphones but also to personal communications and smart technology with materially similar functionality.
- 5.2** Pupils must not routinely use or wear during the School day devices capable of communication, notifications, internet access, photography, audio recording or video recording. This includes smartwatches, cellular or Wi-Fi-enabled watches, smart glasses, camera glasses, AI-enabled wearable devices, wearable cameras, personal recording devices, and connected earbuds where used for unauthorised communication or recording.
- 5.3** A conventional digital or analogue watch which does not provide communications, internet or recording functionality is permitted.
- 5.4** Limited-purpose devices required for an approved medical need, disability or other agreed reasonable adjustment may be permitted under section 11.

6. Recording by pupils

- 6.1** Pupils must not photograph, film or make audio recordings of pupils, staff, visitors, lessons, meetings, activities or conversations without the express permission of a member of staff and any other necessary consent.
- 6.2** Secret, covert or unauthorised recording will normally be regarded as a serious breach of School expectations and may also give rise to safeguarding concerns.
- 6.3** This applies whether recording takes place using a phone, smartwatch, laptop, tablet, smart glasses, earphones, wearable technology or any other device.

7. Boarders

- 7.1** Westonbirt recognises that boarding pupils live at School and have different communication needs from day pupils.
- 7.2** During the teaching day, boarders are subject to the same smartphone-free expectations as other pupils. Smartphones must be stored securely in accordance with the arrangements specified by the relevant boarding house and must not be carried or accessed during the teaching day.
- 7.3** Outside the teaching day, boarders may have access to smartphones at appropriate times and in appropriate boarding locations in accordance with boarding-house routines. These arrangements should support appropriate private communication with families, including across international time zones, while protecting sleep, study, relationships and wellbeing.
- 7.4** Boarding leadership and management sit within the remit of the Deputy Head Pastoral. Houseparents and boarding staff implement the agreed operational arrangements within houses.
- 7.5** The possession of a smartphone by a boarder outside the teaching day does not constitute an exception to Westonbirt's status as a smartphone-free school during the educational day.

8. Sixth Form

- 8.1 Westonbirt recognises the increasing independence and responsibility expected of Sixth Form pupils and the importance of their role in modelling the culture of the School.
- 8.2 Sixth Form pupils may use smartphones only at specifically designated times and in specifically designated Sixth Form locations published by the School. Outside those arrangements, smartphones must remain stored and must not be accessed.
- 8.3 Sixth Form pupils must not use smartphones in front of younger pupils during the School day. Any use outside the authorised locations or times will be treated as a breach of this procedure and may result in confiscation and escalation through the Behaviour and Discipline Policy.
- 8.4 These limited arrangements are intended to provide additional responsibility without undermining the smartphone-free environment experienced by younger pupils.

9. Contact between parents and pupils

- 9.1 Parents should not contact pupils directly on personal devices during the School day.
- 9.2 Where a parent needs to communicate an urgent or important message, they should contact the School through the appropriate School Office, Reception or House team. The School will ensure that important messages are passed to pupils promptly and that pupils can contact home when there is a legitimate need.
- 9.3 Pupils will never be prevented from accessing appropriate help or contacting home in an emergency.

10. Staff expectations

- 10.1 Staff play an important role in modelling the School's expectations. Personal mobile phones should not ordinarily be used by staff in front of pupils during the School day.
- 10.2 There will be legitimate professional circumstances in which staff may use a phone or similar device, including authentication, emergency communication, School administration or authorised educational activity.

11. Reasonable adjustments and exceptional circumstances

- 11.1 The School recognises its duties under the Equality Act 2010 and its wider safeguarding responsibilities.
- 11.2 A pupil may be permitted access to otherwise restricted technology where this represents a necessary and reasonable adjustment or is required because of an individual medical, disability, safeguarding or other exceptional need. Examples may include technology used as part of continuous glucose monitoring or another approved medical or assistive system.
- 11.3 Such arrangements should normally be agreed in advance, recorded by the School, identify the device and purpose, specify when and where it may be accessed, and be reviewed periodically.
- 11.4 An agreed adjustment permits only the access necessary to meet the identified need. It does not provide unrestricted smartphone use.

12. Trips, fixtures and activities beyond the normal School day

- 12.1** The expectation for pupils, parents and staff is that this procedure will normally apply to School trips. Day trips will normally follow the arrangements applicable during the School day, while residential trips will normally follow the principles applicable to boarders.
- 12.2** The School may establish specific arrangements for residential visits, sports fixtures, expeditions, trips and other activities outside the normal School day where this is justified by safeguarding, communication, travel or the purpose of the activity.
- 12.3** Permission to carry a device does not automatically mean unrestricted use is permitted. Trip leaders may collect devices, restrict use, or specify times and locations for access where this supports safeguarding, participation, sleep, learning or the purpose of the activity.
- 12.4** These arrangements should be communicated before departure and should be consistent with the Educational Visits and Trips Policy and the Staff Handbook for Organising Educational Visits and Trips.

13. Breaches of the procedure

- 13.1** The School's response will be fair, proportionate and consistent with the Behaviour and Discipline Policy and the Promoting Positive Behaviour Framework.
- 13.2** Where a pupil brings a prohibited smartphone or other prohibited smart device into the teaching-day environment, or accesses a basic phone contrary to this procedure, the device may be confiscated and the incident recorded.
- 13.3** A first or isolated breach will normally result in immediate confiscation, parent notification, a one-hour centralised Refocus detention or other appropriate sanction, and return of the device in accordance with School arrangements, which may require parental collection.
- 13.4** Repeated breaches may result in a longer proportionate period of confiscation, escalated detention or other behaviour sanction, direct discussion with parents, and review of the pupil's arrangements for bringing a communications device to School.
- 13.5** Persistent, deliberate or serious breaches may result in further escalation under the Behaviour and Discipline Policy, a parental meeting, a behaviour agreement or equivalent pastoral intervention, and restrictions on bringing any personal communications device to School.
- 13.6** More serious sanctions may be appropriate where a device has been used for bullying or harassment, sharing harmful or inappropriate material, unauthorised recording, deliberate circumvention of safeguarding systems, academic malpractice, sexualised imagery, threats or intimidation, or conduct giving rise to a safeguarding concern.
- 13.7** The School will consider the pupil's age, SEND, disability, medical needs, individual circumstances, intent, impact and the purpose of any sanction when deciding what is proportionate.

14. Searching and confiscation

- 14.1** The Behaviour and Discipline Policy and the School's Searching, Screening and Confiscation procedures identify the circumstances in which authorised staff may search for and confiscate items, including mobile phones,

smartphones and comparable smart or recording devices where the applicable legal and School requirements are satisfied.

- 14.2** Where a device is confiscated, it will be stored appropriately and returned in accordance with the School's published arrangements.
- 14.3** Where content on a device may present a safeguarding or criminal concern, staff will follow safeguarding procedures and seek advice from the Designated Safeguarding Lead rather than unnecessarily viewing, copying or sharing material.

15. Parents, visitors and recording technology

- 15.1** The pupil smartphone procedure does not prevent an adult visitor from carrying a personal mobile phone for ordinary purposes. However, separate expectations apply to recording technology on School premises and during School meetings.
- 15.2** Parents, carers, visitors and other adults must not make an audio recording, video recording, photograph or other digital record of a meeting, conversation or individual without the School's express prior permission. This applies to smartphones, smartwatches, smart glasses, AI-enabled wearables, laptops, tablets, dedicated recording equipment and any comparable device.
- 15.3** This expectation applies to parents' evenings, pastoral, safeguarding, disciplinary, SEND, academic, complaints and boarding meetings, and other formal or informal discussions involving School staff or pupils.
- 15.4** Photography and recording at sports fixtures, performances, concerts and other School events are subject to the School's safeguarding, photography/consent and event-specific arrangements. The School may restrict photography or recording where necessary to protect pupils, privacy or safeguarding.
- 15.5** Where there is a genuine need for a meeting to be recorded as a reasonable adjustment or for another compelling reason, this should be requested in advance. The School may determine that another adjustment, such as written notes, a support person or a School-controlled recording, appropriately meets the identified need.

16. Unauthorised recording by a parent or visitor

- 16.1** Where a member of staff knows or reasonably believes that an adult is recording a meeting without permission, the member of staff should state clearly that recording is not permitted, ask the individual to stop, and may pause, adjourn or terminate the meeting if recording continues.
- 16.2** Staff should make a factual written record of what occurred and refer the matter to an appropriate senior leader. Depending upon the circumstances, the matter may also be referred to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and/or Data Protection Lead.
- 16.3** The School should not ordinarily attempt to seize, search or inspect an adult's personal device.
- 16.4** Where an individual repeatedly or deliberately disregards this expectation, the School may impose proportionate conditions upon future meetings or access to the premises. Where a recording has been distributed, published or used in a way that raises safeguarding, harassment, confidentiality, data-protection or other legal concerns, the School may take further advice and respond accordingly.

17. Education and digital responsibility

17.1 Becoming smartphone-free does not mean that Westonbirt is anti-technology.

17.2 The School will continue to teach pupils how to use technology safely, critically, ethically and effectively. We want pupils to develop the ability to manage digital technology responsibly while also experiencing a School day in which face-to-face relationships, concentration, conversation, physical activity, creativity and learning are not continually interrupted by personal smartphones.

18. Related policies and documents

18.1 This procedure should be read alongside the Behaviour and Discipline Policy; Promoting Positive Behaviour Framework; Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy; Online Safety Policy; Acceptable Use arrangements; Searching, Screening and Confiscation procedures; SEND and reasonable-adjustment arrangements; relevant medical policies; Boarding Staff Handbook and boarding-house routines; Educational Visits and Trips Policy; Parent/Visitor Code of Conduct where applicable; and Data Protection and Privacy policies.

19. Monitoring, implementation and review

19.1 The School will monitor the implementation and impact of this procedure during 2026–27. This may include patterns of smartphone breaches, repeat breaches, confiscations and sanctions, Sixth Form compliance, reasonable adjustments, safeguarding incidents involving smart technology, and feedback from pupils, parents and staff.

19.2 Implementation evidence will be considered alongside the Behaviour and Discipline Policy, safeguarding arrangements and the School's wider quality-assurance processes.

19.3 The procedure will be reviewed during the 2026–27 academic year and thereafter as part of the normal procedure-review cycle, and sooner where statutory, regulatory, safeguarding or technological developments make this necessary.

20. Regulatory references

20.1 Department for Education: Mobile phones in schools (statutory guidance, updated 29 June 2026; schools should begin following it from 1 September 2026).

20.2 Department for Education: Keeping children safe in education 2026 (in force from 1 September 2026).

20.3 Department for Education: Behaviour in schools and Searching, Screening and Confiscation guidance, as applicable.