



WESTONBIRT
— SCHOOL —

SMARTPHONE-FREE SCHOOL

Parent Information Pack

More present. More connected. Ready to learn.

VERSION 1 • FOR PUBLICATION

Implementation from September 2026

Our approach

From September 2026, Westonbirt will operate as a smartphone-free school. At Westonbirt, we want pupils to think deeply, create with ambition, belong to a strong community, lead with confidence and achieve their potential. A smartphone-free school day supports those aims by protecting attention, conversation, relationships and the quality of learning.

OUR CENTRAL INTENTION

Westonbirt is a smartphone-free school. Pupils should not bring any mobile phone to school. Where a mobile phone is required for travel or communication outside the school day, a basic calls-and-texts phone should be used and must be declared via the school's [online form](#).

The school day

For the purposes of this approach, the smartphone-free expectation begins as soon as a pupil arrives at school and whilst on any school arranged transport

In the event of a basic mobile phone needing to be brought into school, on arrival at school, or whilst on school transport, pupils should switch off their phone and put it away securely. For pupils being collected, this expectation continues until 17:40, when school transport departs. Sixth Form students have the limited access arrangements set out separately in this pack.

What this is - and what it is not

- A clear boundary around personal smart technology during the school day.
- A practical approach that still allows safe communication for travel.
- A consistent expectation for Years 7-13, including recognising Sixth Form flexibility.
- A policy with reasonable adjustments and agreed exceptions where genuinely needed.
- Not a rejection of technology: school-approved digital tools remain part of learning.

What the statutory guidance says

The Department for Education's revised guidance became statutory on 29 June 2026 and schools should begin following it from 1 September 2026. It applies to independent and state schools in England.

DfE expectation	Westonbirt response
Mobile phone-free by default	A smartphone-free school with exceptions agreed individually.
No access throughout the school day	On arrival, until they have left school or school transportation, no routine smartphone access for Years 7-11; Sixth Form access only at specifically identified times and locations.
Smart technology may be included	Smartwatches and similar messaging/recording devices fall within the same principle and are not permitted within the school day. Pupils should not wear smart or AI tech.
Boarding needs separate arrangements outside teaching time	Boarders may access smartphones after the school day under House routines.
Sixth Form access may be permitted at certain limited times and locations	Westonbirt will permit Sixth Form access only at specifically identified times and locations, with no use in front of younger pupils.
Sanctions may include confiscation and detention	A clear first sanction, followed by proportionate escalation.
Reasonable adjustments must be considered	Medical, disability-related and exceptional arrangements are agreed case by case.

WHY OUR APPROACH CAN GO FURTHER

The DfE sets a national minimum expectation. It allows schools to decide how best to achieve a phone-free environment in their own context. Westonbirt's preference for basic phones and one Years 7-13 routine is a deliberate school choice designed to make the boundary simple and consistent.

The Westonbirt standard

ACCEPTABLE	NOT ACCEPTABLE
A simple 4G calls-and-texts phone only where needed for travel.	A smartphone or 'brick' phone brought routinely to school.
School-approved laptops/tablets used for learning.	Using a personal smartphone as the normal classroom device.
A simple watch without communications or recording functions.	Smartwatches used for messages, calls, notifications, internet access or recording.
An agreed medical or reasonable-adjustment arrangement under the School's Acceptable Use Risk Assessment.	Unarranged personal exceptions.
Boarder smartphone access after the school day under House routines.	Smartphone use during the 08:15-17:40 school day.

The simple routine

- 1. Before arrival at school: use a basic phone if needed for travel on school transport or collection arrangements.**
- 2. On arrival: the phone is switched off, stored securely and kept out of sight. This remains the routine until 17:40 for Years 7-11. Sixth Form students follow the separately identified limited-access arrangements.**
- 3. Urgent contact during the day: use the School Office, House team or another agreed school route.**
- 4. After 17:40: basic phones may be used for travel on school transport. Boarders move into the separate boarding arrangements set out in this pack.**

Day pupils, buses and collection

We recognise that many pupils travel independently by using school transport or are met by parents at bus stops. The smartphone-free approach is not intended to make those journeys less safe or less practical.

TRAVEL PRINCIPLE

Pupils are 'at school' from the moment they embark school transport. Where a phone is genuinely useful for the journey, the school is not asking families to remove communication. We are asking families to separate travel communication from smartphone access during the school day.

For school bus users

A basic 4G phone can be used for calls and SMS before embarking school transport in the morning and when disembarking school transport after 1740. On arrival at school it must be switched off, stored securely and kept out of sight until after 17:40.

If transport is delayed

The school and our transport management system (Vectare), remain the primary means for operational communication about significant delays. A pupil's basic phone provides an additional way to contact home.

If a parent is meeting a bus

A basic phone is sufficient for ordinary collection messages such as 'the bus is delayed', 'we are ten minutes away' or 'I have arrived'.

What about location tracking?

We understand why some families value smartphone location services. They do not, however, require a pupil to carry a smartphone throughout the school day. Any specific safeguarding need should be discussed with the pastoral team. Some parents have used Apple AirTags or Galaxy SmartTags which do not require a data connection but rely on Bluetooth from nearby connected devices.

What devices are permitted to be used on board school transport?

School issued devices, Kindles and e-readers, digital music players (iPods or similar) or FM / DAB radios and small consoles, such as Nintendo Switches, are all permitted on board and may be used without disturbing others, or the driver.

Boarding

Boarding is also pupils' home during term time. Our arrangements therefore distinguish clearly between the smartphone-free school day and appropriate access during boarding time.

Proposed routine

- From leaving the boarding house until 17:40: boarders follow the same smartphone-free school routine as day pupils, subject to the separately identified Sixth Form limited-access arrangements.
- From approximately 17:40/18:00 onwards: smartphones may be made available in accordance with House routines.
- Boarders will have appropriate opportunities to contact parents and family privately, including arrangements that take account of international time zones.
- House staff will designate device-free periods for meals, study, activities and other community routines.
- Smartphones must ordinarily be handed in before bed for overnight storage.
- Exact hand-in times may vary appropriately by age, House and evening routine.
- Online safety, respectful communication, safeguarding and behaviour expectations continue to apply throughout boarding time.
- Devices should be connected to the school's Wi-Fi network which provides additional filtering and monitoring and ensures that internet access is in line with our Acceptable User Policy.

CONTINUITY WITH CURRENT BOARDING PRACTICE

For Sixth Form boarders, greater independence in boarding life remains important. During the school day, Sixth Form boarders follow the same limited-times-and-locations arrangements as other Sixth Form students; evening arrangements at Holford can continue to recognise age and responsibility while allowing House staff to intervene where phone use affects academic work, sleep or wellbeing.

Sixth Form

Greater independence brings greater responsibility - and with that comes the opportunity for Sixth Form students to model mature, purposeful smartphone use.

The DfE guidance asks schools to consider whether Sixth Form students should be permitted access to mobile phones at certain and limited times and locations, reflecting increased independence and responsibility while protecting the phone-free environment for younger pupils. Westonbirt will adopt this approach.

Limited Sixth Form access

Sixth Form students may bring a smartphone to school, but access is not unrestricted. The school will specifically identify the places and times at which smartphones may be used. Outside those identified arrangements, the phone must be switched off, put away and not used.

The precise authorised spaces and times will be communicated clearly to students and parents before implementation and may be reviewed as the school evaluates how the arrangements are working.

Responsibility and role modelling

- Use smartphones only in the specifically identified Sixth Form locations and at the specifically identified times.
- Do not use smartphones in front of younger pupils.
- Move between lessons, shared spaces and the wider school site with phones switched off and put away.
- Use the additional freedom responsibly and support the smartphone-free culture across the school.
- Respond immediately and respectfully to staff direction about phone use.
- Continue to use school-approved technology for academic work.

What happens if a Sixth Form student uses a phone outside the agreed arrangements?

Any use outside the specifically identified times or locations will be treated as a breach of the school's mobile phone expectations and dealt with through the Behaviour Policy. The device may be confiscated and the pupil sanctioned, with consequences escalating for repeated or deliberate breaches in line with the framework in this pack.

The purpose is not to create a separate unrestricted phone culture for Sixth Form. It is to give senior pupils a carefully defined level of additional responsibility, engage them in getting the approach right, and enable them to act as positive role models for the wider school community.

Parent FAQs

Can my child bring a smartphone if it stays switched off?

For Years 7-11, our default remains no: pupils should not routinely bring a smartphone to school, and a basic calls-and-texts phone should be used where a phone is needed for travel. Sixth Form students may bring smartphones, but should use them only at the specifically identified times and locations.

How do I let the school know that my child will be bringing a 'brick' phone into school because they use school transport?

Any day pupil that needs to bring a 'brick' phone into school must have that intention registered with the school by completing this [form](#). This must be done by a parent or guardian. If this form is not completed, the school's assumption and position is that the child does not have a phone with them during the school day.

How do I contact my child urgently?

Please contact the [School Office](#) (01666 880 333) or relevant House team. Staff will relay urgent messages and facilitate contact where necessary.

Can my child use a smartwatch?

Not where it provides mobile-phone-like functionality such as messaging, notifications, calls, internet access or audio/video recording. A simple watch is appropriate.

What about earbuds or headphones?

Personal audio devices should not be used during lessons or around the school day unless specifically authorised for learning, accessibility or another agreed purpose.

Can a phone be used as a camera, calculator or timetable?

No. Appropriate school-approved equipment and systems should be used instead.

What happens on school trips?

Trip leaders will set arrangements appropriate to the activity, age group, travel and safeguarding context. Phones may be prohibited or restricted. The default position is that trips follow our Mobile Phone and Educational Visits Policies.

What if my child has a medical need?

Please contact the school. We will consider the individual need and agree a specific arrangement where smartphone access is necessary. An example of this would be where continuous glucose monitoring is required.

What if my child has SEND or another individual circumstance?

Reasonable adjustments and exceptional circumstances will be considered on their merits. Any adjustment should meet the identified need without creating unrestricted general access.

My child says that they need to use an iPad or tablet during lessons, can they bring it into school?

No. All pupils in Yr7-11 will have a school issued device which will connect to our monitored and filtered Wi-Fi network. These devices will be the only ones allowed in lessons. Others will be confiscated.

DO YOU HAVE MORE QUESTIONS?

Please click [this link](#) which will take you to more pupil and parents FAQ's

Fair and proportionate consequences

The expectation must be clear enough to enforce consistently. At the same time, sanctions should be lawful, fair and proportionate, and individual circumstances must be considered where relevant.

Situation	Indicative Response	Purpose
First ordinary breach / Sixth Form use outside authorised arrangements	Device confiscated securely. One-hour Friday evening detention. Parent informed. Return arrangements determined by the school and communicated clearly.	Establish a meaningful and predictable first consequence.
Second / repeated breach	Further confiscation; escalated school detention/sanction; parent contact; pastoral discussion about why the expectation is not being met.	Deter repetition and identify any underlying barrier.
Persistent or deliberate non-compliance	Parent meeting; behaviour support/contract; restricted arrangements for bringing any device; further sanction in line with the Behaviour Policy.	Address persistent defiance and restore compliance.
Serious or harmful misuse	Immediate safeguarding and/or behaviour response. The consequence reflects the underlying conduct - for example bullying, harassment, filming, image-sharing or deliberate recording - rather than treating it merely as a phone breach.	Protect pupils and staff and respond to the seriousness of the behaviour.

This remains an indicative framework. Age, SEND, medical need, safeguarding context, intent and other relevant individual circumstances should be considered.

FIRST BREACH

Confiscation + parents informed + one-hour Friday evening detention.

Staff, Parents, visitors and recording

A smartphone-free pupil culture works best when adults support the same principles of attention, privacy and respectful communication.

Staff at Westonbirt

All 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.
- Personal mobile phones should be out of sight when moving between lessons, shared spaces and the wider school site.
- By supporting the smartphone-free culture across the school.
- Continuing to use school-approved technology for academic work.

There will be legitimate professional circumstances in which staff may use a phone or similar device, including authentication, completing registers, emergency communication, School administration or authorised educational activity.

Parents' evenings and meetings

Parents and visitors should not make audio or video recordings of parents' evenings, pastoral meetings, disciplinary meetings or other school discussions without the school's explicit prior agreement and the knowledge of everyone involved.

- Keep personal devices on silent during formal meetings.
- Do not record staff, pupils or other parents without permission.
- If an accessibility or reasonable-adjustment need makes recording helpful, discuss this with the school in advance so an appropriate arrangement can be agreed.
- At performances, fixtures and public events, follow event-specific photography and recording instructions.

If unauthorised recording takes place

A member of staff will ask for the recording to stop. The school may pause or end the meeting and may ask the person to leave the premises where necessary. Any safeguarding, privacy or data-protection concern will be managed through the relevant school procedures. Future meetings may be subject to agreed conditions where this is necessary to protect pupils or staff.

Digital wellbeing beyond school

The school can create protected phone-free time, but healthy digital habits are strongest when home and school reinforce one another.

PROTECT SLEEP Consider keeping smartphones out of bedrooms overnight and using a separate alarm clock.

CREATE DEVICE-FREE MOMENTS Meals, homework and family conversations are easier when notifications are elsewhere.

MAKE DELIBERATE CHOICES Discuss when social media is appropriate rather than allowing access simply because peers have it.

KEEP TALKING Regular, calm conversations about online life make it more likely that young people will seek adult help when something goes wrong.

MODEL THE BEHAVIOUR Adults putting devices away during conversations reinforces the value of attention and presence.

DIGITAL EDUCATION CONTINUES

Smartphone-free does not mean digitally unaware. Pupils will continue to learn about online safety, responsible technology use, AI, digital citizenship and the consequences of online behaviour.

Implementation from September

01	BEFORE TERM Publish final policy and parent information; clarify boarding routines; identify pupils who may require individual arrangements; ensure school contact routes are clear.
02	START OF TERM Teach and rehearse the routine with pupils in Years 7-13, including the specifically identified Sixth Form access times and locations. Remind staff of consistent implementation and the expectation that personal phones are not used in front of pupils except where professionally necessary.
03	FIRST WEEKS Apply the first-breach response consistently, while distinguishing ordinary breaches from safeguarding concerns or serious harmful misuse.
04	REVIEW Gather operational feedback from pupils, parents, boarding, Sixth Form and transport teams. Refine practical processes without weakening the core smartphone-free principle.

Parent checklist

Before the start of term, please:

- ☐ Decide whether your child genuinely needs a phone for travel.
- ☐ If they do, choose a simple 4G calls-and-texts phone rather than a smartphone.
- ☐ Check the handset and SIM work on your chosen UK network.
- ☐ **Inform the school, using this [form](#), of your intent for your child to bring that phone to school, recording the IMEI number, manufacturer and model**
- ☐ Save essential family and school contact numbers.
- ☐ **Discuss the expectation that, on arrival at school, the phone is switched off and put away until 17:40 (with the separate limited-access arrangements for Sixth Form).**
- ☐ For boarders, discuss the distinction between the school day and approved evening smartphone access.
- ☐ **For Sixth Form pupils, reinforce that smartphone access is a limited privilege at specifically identified times and locations, carrying additional responsibility to model the school's expectations.**
- ☐ Contact the school before term if your child may require a medical, disability-related or other agreed exception.
- ☐ **Use the School Office/House team rather than contacting your child directly during the restricted school day for urgent communication.**

Sources and References

Department for Education

Mobile phones in schools - statutory guidance, updated 29 June 2026. The guidance became statutory on 29 June 2026 and schools should begin following it from 1 September 2026.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mobile-phones-in-schools/mobile-phones-in-schools>

Communicating your policy for prohibiting the use of mobile phones in schools to parents - updated 29 June 2026.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mobile-phones-in-schools/communicating-your-policy-for-prohibiting-the-use-of-mobile-phones-in-schools-to-parents>

Basic-phone market check

HMD's current UK feature-phone range was checked in August 2026. The guide therefore uses current HMD examples and avoids presenting discontinued Nokia variants as the primary recommendation.

https://www.hmd.com/en_gb/feature-phones

Choosing a basic phone

In general, pupils should **NOT** bring a phone, of any kind, into school at all. If a phone is needed, then it must be a 'brick' phone.

The school does not recommend a particular make or model. The best device for most pupils is simple: reliable calls, SMS, 4G/VoLTE compatibility, a physical keypad and long battery life, without a modern smartphone app ecosystem.

What to look for

- 4G/VoLTE support - check compatibility with your chosen UK network.
- Unlocked handset, unless you are buying it with a specific network.
- Calls and SMS as the primary functions.
- Long standby battery life and straightforward charging.
- Physical keypad and simple interface.
- No social-media app ecosystem or app store.

Current examples to consider - August 2026

Example	Why it may suit	Important check
HMD 105 4G	Current simple 4G feature phone; large keypad, long standby battery and calls-focused design.	Includes extra basic features such as radio/voice recorder; check network compatibility.
HMD 2660 Flip 4G	Current social-media-free flip phone with large screen/buttons and 4G calling.	More expensive than the simplest feature phones; availability/colour varies.
Nokia 225 4G / other current HMD-Nokia feature phones	Useful alternatives where families prefer a different form factor.	Specifications vary by exact model; some feature phones include cameras, Bluetooth or basic internet features.

Important: model ranges change quickly. The school is not endorsing a retailer or manufacturer. Check the exact handset before purchase. Older Nokia 105 4G and Nokia 3210 4G models remain familiar examples but HMD currently lists some previous variants as discontinued.

OUR BUYING RULE OF THUMB

Choose the least complicated phone that safely does the job you and your child need it to do.



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SMARTPHONE-FREE FROM SEPTEMBER 2026

**A clearer boundary for learning,
relationships and wellbeing.**

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