



Mobile Phone, Technology and Wearables Policy

Draft: January 2026
Ratified: February 2026
Review: January 2027

Chair of Governors:

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized, cursive 'A' followed by several loops and a horizontal line at the end.

Headteacher:

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Ethos of The Orchard School

At The Orchard School, **Everyone Matters, Everyone Cares**. Our ethos is rooted in the belief that every child has the potential to grow, thrive, and succeed when provided with the right environment, relationships, and support. **The Orchard Way** guides everything we do, ensuring that our approach is therapeutic, inclusive, and centred on understanding behaviour as communication. We are committed to nurturing the social, emotional, and mental health (SEMH) needs of our pupils, recognising their unique challenges while celebrating their individuality. Through strong relationships and a culture of care, we create a school where every pupil feels safe, valued, and empowered to reach their full potential.

Principles of Our Ethos:

1. **Respect for the Individual:** Every pupil deserves respect, dignity, and the opportunity to be heard.
2. **Relationships at the Heart of Learning:** Positive, trusting relationships form the foundation of our work.
3. **Equity and Inclusion:** We ensure all pupils have access to the support they need to succeed.
4. **Therapeutic and Nurturing Approaches:** We use Therapeutic Thinking approaches to support regulation, resilience and positive behaviour.
5. **High Expectations with Compassion:** Balancing aspirations with understanding and personalisation.
6. **Collaboration with Stakeholders:** Families, carers, and agencies work together to support pupils.
7. **A Safe and Predictable Environment:** Structure and boundaries foster trust and confidence.
8. **Restorative Practices:** Addressing conflicts through understanding, accountability, and growth.

Mission Statement

At The Orchard School, Everyone Matters, Everyone Cares. Our ethos is rooted in the belief that every child has the potential to grow, thrive, and succeed when provided with the right environment, relationships, and support. The Orchard Way guides everything we do, ensuring that our approach is therapeutic, inclusive, and centred on understanding behaviour as communication. We are committed to nurturing the social, emotional, and mental health (SEMH) needs of our pupils, recognising their unique challenges while celebrating their individuality. Through strong relationships and a culture of care, we create a school where every pupil feels safe.

- Trust through consistent and transparent expectations
- Belonging through shared routines that reduce anxiety and conflict
- Aspiration by protecting learning time and focus
- Voice through restorative, relational responses
- Pride in safe, respectful conduct
- Curiosity supported through structured and appropriate technology use

We balance high expectations with compassion, ensuring all decisions are lawful, proportionate and informed by pupils' EHCPs.

1. Introduction and Rationale

The Orchard School is a specialist SEMH school for pupils in Years 3 to 11, all of whom have Education, Health and Care Plans.

In January 2026, the Department for Education strengthened its national expectations, requiring schools to be mobile phone free by default, meaning pupils must not access mobile phones or smart devices at any point during the school day, including transitions, breaks and lunch.

The DfE has confirmed that:

- Expectations are now tougher
- Implementation will be checked at every Ofsted inspection
- Schools must demonstrate consistent practice
- Reasonable adjustments may be made for SEND pupils where necessary

This policy sets out how The Orchard School meets these statutory expectations while making carefully planned SEMH-informed reasonable adjustments, always aligned to individual EHCPs.

2. Legal and Statutory Framework

This policy is written in accordance with:

- DfE Mobile Phones in Schools Guidance (January 2026)

- Behaviour in Schools Guidance
- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Searching, Screening and Confiscation Guidance
- DfE Suspension and Permanent Exclusion Guidance (2024)
- Equality Act 2010
- Ofsted Behaviour, Attitudes and Safeguarding expectations

3. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All pupils in Years 3 to 11
- All staff
- Parents and carers
- Visitors, contractors and external professionals

Devices covered include:

- Mobile phones
- Smartwatches
- Tablets
- Wearables
- Any device capable of recording, messaging or digital communication

This policy applies to personal devices brought onto the school site. School-issued devices, including iPads and other technology used for learning, are governed by separate Acceptable Use and Online Safety policies.

4. Policy Statement – Mobile Phone Free School Day

The Orchard School operates a mobile phone free environment.

Pupils must not access mobile phones or smart technology during:

- Arrival on site
- Lessons
- Transitions
- Break times
- Lunch
- Until they are fully off site at the end of the day

This expectation applies to all pupils unless a documented, approved reasonable adjustment is in place.

5. Procedures for Pupils

5.1 Arrival

- Pupils hand mobile phones to their Form Tutor on arrival
- Devices are stored in locked, staff-only secure cabinets
- Storage arrangements are consistent across the school

If a pupil refuses to hand in their device, staff follow a stepped, relational approach:

1. Community Support Staff provide a change of face and de-escalation support
2. Parent or carer is contacted and may speak to the pupil via a school phone
3. Continued refusal results in the pupil being taken to a safe, supervised space and SLT being informed

5.2 Persistent Refusal and Parent Collection

If a pupil continues to refuse to hand in their mobile phone after all relational and SEMH-informed strategies have been exhausted, the Headteacher may determine that the behaviour constitutes a serious breach of the Behaviour Policy.

In such cases:

- A formal suspension may be issued, in line with DfE statutory guidance.
- A parent or carer will be required to collect the pupil or authorise transport home.
- The pupil may not remain on site once a suspension has been issued.
- All such decisions will be formally recorded as suspensions to ensure lawful practice and to avoid unlawful off-rolling.

Suspension is never automatic and is always a last resort.

5.3 During the School Day

- All devices remain locked away
- Pupils do not access phones at any time, including breaks and lunch
- Staff apply expectations consistently across the school

6. End of the School Day

- Devices are returned to pupils at dismissal
- Pupils are expected not to turn phones on until they are off school grounds.

Where this does not happen, staff respond proportionately and in line with the Relational and Therapeutic Behaviour Policy.

7. Reasonable Adjustments Linked to EHCPs

All reasonable adjustments must be:

- Explicitly linked to a pupil's EHCP or support plan
- Risk assessed
- Approved by the SENCo, DSL and Headteacher
- Clearly documented
- Reviewed at least termly
- Adjustments are individual, not blanket permissions.

7.1 General Principles for Technology-Related Adjustments

The Orchard School recognises that some pupils wear smartwatches as part of their emotional regulation, independence development or learning needs, including:

- Learning to tell the time
- Supporting transitions and predictability
- Providing a sense of safety and reassurance

Conditions of use:

- No independent internet access, messaging, social media or recording
- Communication functions disabled or restricted
- Used solely for the agreed purpose
- Explicitly linked to the EHCP or support plan
- Approved by SENCo, DSL and Headteacher
- Misuse may result in review or withdrawal

Smartwatches are not permitted as a substitute for mobile phones.

9.2 Other Smart Technology Adjustments

Some pupils may require limited, controlled access to smart technology due to identified needs, for example:

- Medical monitoring devices
- Communication aids or AAC apps in locked mode
- Safety arrangements linked to transport

8. Staff Use of Mobile Phones

- Staff do not use personal mobile phones in front of pupils
- Staff must not record or contact pupils using personal devices
- Emergencies are managed using school-issued devices only

9. Visitors, Professionals and Contractors

- Mobile phones must be on silent or switched off
- No photographs or recordings are permitted
- Visitors sign a Mobile Device Acceptable Use statement at reception

10. Safeguarding and Online Safety

Mobile devices present safeguarding risks including:

- Online bullying
- Inappropriate recording
- Exposure to harmful content

This policy supports a strong safeguarding culture and links directly to:

- Safeguarding Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Relational and Therapeutic Behaviour Policy

11. Searching, Screening and Confiscation

- Staff may confiscate devices in line with statutory guidance
- Searches are conducted lawfully, proportionately and respectfully
- Confiscated items are stored securely
- Serious misuse, including safeguarding concerns, is managed through the school's Safeguarding Policy

12. Behaviour, Consequences and Support

Responses to breaches of this policy are managed in line with the school's Relational Behaviour Policy and Therapeutic Thinking approach and are relational, proportionate and consistent.

Possible responses include:

- Restorative conversations
- Parent or carer meetings
- Adjustments to behaviour plans
- Suspension as a last resort

13. Working in Partnership with Families

The school will:

- Communicate the policy clearly
- Apply expectations consistently
- Review arrangements through EHCP processes

Parents and Carers will:

- Support the Policy
- Avoid contacting pupils during the school day
- Raise concerns through school channels

Pupils are supported to:

- Understand expectations
- Develop independence without reliance on devices
- Engage in restorative conversations where issues arise

14. Monitoring and Review

- SLT and Governors review the policy annually
- Incidents are monitored termly
- Ofsted will review implementation at inspection