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"Bring Your Own Device" (BYOD) & Mobile Phone Policy

Reviewed by DSL: October 2026

Next review: August 2027

The "Bring Your Own Device (BYOD)" approach provides an additional resource within the curriculum. School recognises the benefits to learning from offering students the opportunity to use tablets, laptops and other ICT devices in school to support learners and their learning. By using any such device in school, students agree to be bound by the additional school rules and requirements set out in this policy.

Students are not permitted to connect to any external wireless service, mobile data connection, hotspot, VPN, proxy service or other method intended to bypass the School filtering and monitoring arrangements whilst using a personal ICT device in School.

The use of a personal ICT device is not to be a distraction in any way to teachers or students. Personal devices must not disrupt class or Private Study areas. Playing games, accessing social networks or other non-school academic related activities are not permitted during lessons or in any area other than the Common Rooms, for Sixth Form.

Students bring their personal ICT devices to use at School at their own risk. Students are expected to act responsibly with regards to their own device, keeping it up to date via regular anti-virus and operating system updates and as secure as possible. It is their duty to be responsible for the upkeep and protection of their devices.

The School is in no way responsible for:

- Personal devices that are broken whilst at school or during school-sponsored activities.
- Any data lost on personal devices.
- Personal devices that are lost or stolen at school or during school-sponsored activities.
- Maintenance or upkeep of any device (keeping it charged, installing updates or upgrades, fixing any software or hardware issues).

Parents should ensure they have adequate insurance cover in place to cover the cost of repair/replacement of a personal ICT device in the event of loss/damage to the device.

Please note that the School has in the past taken serious disciplinary action (e.g. exclusion) in response to offences which originated outside of the School's IT facilities but which impinged on the School or affected members of the School community. This would include, for example, the

use of social media in a manner which could harm the reputation of the School or could cause harm to others.

Mobile Phone Policy

Birkenhead School is a mobile phone-free school for all students in Years 7 to 11. Students in Years 7 to 11 who bring a mobile phone to school must hand it to their Form Tutor during morning registration. Students arriving after registration must hand their mobile phone to The Lodge immediately upon arrival.

Mobile phones will be securely stored and returned at the end of the school day. Students must not retain a phone on their person, access mobile phone functions, or use another student's device during the school day.

Exceptions may be agreed by the School for students with medical needs or special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), with individual arrangements documented and agreed with parents/carers.

In Sixth Form, students may have their phones and may use them in designated Sixth Form Common Spaces at the discretion of the Head of Sixth Form.

Contravention of this policy may result in confiscation of devices, behavioural sanctions, safeguarding intervention, parent meetings, suspension or other disciplinary action. Mobile phones will not be returned to a student and will require parental collection.

Searching and Screening Electronic Devices

Authorised staff may search and examine electronic devices where there is good reason to believe that school rules have been broken, harm may have been caused, or safeguarding concerns exist. School staff have the specific power under the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (as amended) to search for and, if necessary, delete inappropriate images or files on students' electronic devices.

When deciding whether there is a good reason to examine or erase data or files on an electronic device, staff must reasonably suspect that the data or file in question has been, or could be, used to:

- Cause harm, and/or

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- Disrupt teaching, and/or
- Break any of the school rules

If inappropriate material is found on the device, it is up to the staff member in conjunction with the DSL or other member of the senior leadership team to decide whether they should:

- Delete that material, or
- Retain it as evidence (of a criminal offence or a breach of school discipline), and/or
- Report it to the police*

* Staff may also confiscate devices for evidence to hand to the police, if a student discloses that they are being abused and that this abuse includes an online element.

Any searching of students will be carried out in line with:

- The DfE's latest guidance on screening, searching and confiscation
- UKCIS guidance on sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people

Any complaints about searching for or deleting inappropriate images or files on students' electronic devices will be dealt with through the school complaints procedure.

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE) statutory safeguarding guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education, and its advice for schools on:

- Teaching online safety in schools
- Preventing and tackling bullying and cyber-bullying: advice for Headmasters and school staff
- Relationships and sex education
- Searching, screening and confiscation

It also refers to the DfE's guidance on protecting children from radicalisation.

It reflects existing legislation, including but not limited to the Education Act 1996 (as amended), the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and the Equality Act 2010. In addition, it reflects the Education Act 2011, which has given teachers stronger powers to tackle cyber-bullying by, if necessary, searching for and deleting inappropriate images or files on students' electronic devices where they believe there is a 'good reason' to do so.

Online Safety in School

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When using devices in school, these must be connected to the School's wi-fi. The wi-fi is monitored for any harmful searches by a filtering system called Smoothwall. Harmful sites are blocked, and searches made by students which may indicate a safety concern are flagged to the network manager, and the Designated Safeguarding Lead and dealt with appropriately. The School's approach addresses Content, Contact, Conduct and Commerce risks. Students should understand that internet activity may be filtered and monitored for safeguarding purposes.

Students must not use AI tools to create misleading, harmful, bullying, discriminatory, impersonation or sexually explicit content. AI-generated sexual imagery, deepfakes or manipulated harmful content will be treated as serious safeguarding and disciplinary matters.

Reporting Online Safety Concerns

Students must immediately report cyberbullying, grooming concerns, harmful content, extremist material, exploitation, requests for images, attempts to bypass filtering systems, AI-generated harmful content or any activity that places themselves or others at risk.

Mobile Phones on School Trips, Residential Visits and Sports Fixtures

Birkenhead School recognises that there may be educational, practical and social benefits to students having access to mobile phones during school trips, residential visits and sports fixtures. However, the safety, privacy and wellbeing of all members of the school community remain paramount.

The member of staff leading the trip, visit or fixture will determine whether mobile phones are permitted on a particular visit and may impose additional restrictions where required for safeguarding, health and safety, behavioural or operational reasons.

The member of staff leading the trip, visit or fixture must consider and document mobile phone arrangements and associated safeguarding risks within the visit risk assessment, including supervision, permitted use, overnight storage, photography, online communication and procedures for managing misuse. The DSL must approve all relevant risk assessments.

Where mobile phones are permitted, the following expectations apply:

1. **Overnight Storage**
    a. On residential visits, all mobile phones must be handed to staff at the designated collection time each evening.
    b. Devices will be stored securely overnight and returned at an agreed time the following day.

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2. **Use During Activities**

    a. Students may be permitted to carry and use mobile phones during activities where authorised by staff.

    b. This may include taking photographs of places visited, achievements, team activities or other appropriate memories of the trip.

3. **Use During Free Time**

    a. Mobile phones may be used during designated free time periods where such use is supervised by staff and does not interfere with the aims of the trip, social interaction or student wellbeing.

4. **Prohibited Areas and Activities**

    a. Mobile phones must not be used during sports fixtures, competitive events or coaching sessions unless expressly authorised by staff.

    b. Mobile phones must not be used in changing rooms, toilets, showers, dormitories/bedrooms or any area where privacy is expected.

    c. Audio, video or image recording in these areas is strictly prohibited.

5. **Photography and Respect for Others**

    a. Students must respect the privacy of others when using mobile phones.

    b. Photographs or videos must not be taken of another student without their knowledge and consent.

    c. Photographs or videos of staff must not be taken without their permission.

    d. Images, videos or recordings taken during a trip must not be shared online, through messaging platforms or social media without the consent of those depicted and, where appropriate, the school's permission.

    e. Any form of bullying, harassment, misuse of images or inappropriate online activity will be dealt with in accordance with school behaviour and safeguarding procedures.

6. **Misuse**

    a. Any misuse of a mobile phone, including failure to follow staff instructions, unauthorised photography, inappropriate communication or conduct that places the student or others at risk, may result in immediate confiscation of the device.

b. Confiscated devices will normally be retained for the remainder of the trip, visit or fixture and may only be returned to a parent/carer at the school's discretion.

c. Further disciplinary or safeguarding action may be taken where appropriate.

Sports Fixtures and afPE Guidance

For sports fixtures, we also refer to the guidance of the **Association for Physical Education (afPE)** who provide expert guidance regarding mobile phones in school environments, specifically aligning with the **Department for Education (DfE)** statutory mandate requiring schools to be mobile phone-free environments by default.

In physical education (PE), school sport, and physical activity settings, afPE's guidance emphasizes three core pillars: **safeguarding**, **distraction-minimisation**, and **professional boundaries**.

1. Student Digital Safety & Safeguarding

- **Prohibition of Recording:** Students are strictly prohibited from using mobile phones or any other recording-capable smart technology (like smartwatches) in changing rooms, playing fields, or gymnasiums. This eliminates risks associated with unauthorized photography, filming, and the fast-paced propagation of peer-harm or cyberbullying.
- **Medical Exceptions:** The only standard student exception is for documented medical or disability needs (for instance, a student with diabetes using a smartphone to track a continuous glucose monitor). In these instances, clear rules govern when and how the phone is used to preserve privacy for others.

2. Eliminating Injury Risks and Distractions

- **Physical Safety:** Phones represent a significant physical risk if carried in pockets during active lessons (causing bruising or lacerations upon impact) and can damage school equipment if dropped.
- **Focus and Engagement:** By ensuring a phone-free environment during lessons, transitions, and breaks, students maintain full concentration on instructions and peer-to-face socialization, which significantly minimizes accidental injuries on the field or court.

3. Professional Staff Expectations

- **Modelling Behaviour:** PE teachers and coaching staff are required to lead by example. Staff must not use personal mobile phones for personal reasons in front of or around pupils throughout the school day.

- **Authorised Practical Exceptions:** Teachers may use devices for legitimate operational reasons, such as completing registers, issuing department rewards or sanctions, log-ins requiring multi-factor authentication, or using official school-owned devices for officiating or documenting educational activities.

4. Educational Visits and Off-Site Sports Fixtures

When leaving the school site for sports fixtures or off-site activities, the strict in-school default ban shifts to a managed approach.

- **Documented Decision:** Trip or fixture leaders must explicitly document their mobile phone rules within their risk assessments.
- **Risk vs. Benefit:** Staff must balance risks (distraction, online safety) against legitimate benefits, such as using devices for emergency contact during travel or utilizing specific apps to enhance the sporting/educational experience.

Safe Device Usage Advice for Students:

- Be careful to whom you give your mobile phone number and never post it on websites.
- Never return a call or text message to a number you do not know.
- Never reply to texts saying you have won prizes. These are usually based around premium rate numbers and may cost you a small fortune.
- If you are using text chat, make sure your username does not give away your real name.
- If you receive abusive text messages, keep them. You do not have to read them. When the time comes to take action, these messages can be used as evidence.
- If you receive abusive text or chat messages, ask for help from your Form Tutor, Head of Year, the School Nurse, a parent or any trusted adult. You can also contact your mobile phone provider.
- Remember, by forwarding a text, email, photo, video, etc. you may be making a problem worse. You could be unwittingly involving yourself in bullying. You may even be breaking the law. It is illegal to share explicit images or send any explicit images (including those of yourself).