



Mobile Phone Policy

Purpose of the policy

This policy outlines our approach to mobile phone usage at Wildwood Nature School. We are committed to ensuring the safety of children in our care and while we recognise that mobile phones in the school have a role to play for the purpose of communication and assessment, we are also aware that casual or inappropriate use of mobile phones on campus could pose a risk to children and adults.

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1. Risks associated with mobile phone usage

The enhanced functions of many mobile phones are of most concern and are most susceptible to misuse. Misuse includes the taking and distribution of indecent images, exploitation and bullying. Mobile phones can cause an unnecessary distraction during the working day and can be intrusive when used in the company of others. When mobile phones are misused, it can impact an individual's dignity, privacy and right to confidentiality. Such concerns are not exclusive to children and young people; hence there is a duty to protect the needs and vulnerabilities of everyone. It can be difficult to detect when such devices are present or being used, particularly in relation to enhanced functions, such as cameras. The use of all mobile phones is, therefore, limited, regardless of their capabilities.

The aim is to avoid distraction and disruption of the working day, and to minimise the opportunities for any individual to make any covert images or misuse functions in any other way. This policy applies to all children, staff, families, volunteers and visitors.

Please note that for the purposes of this policy, the term 'mobile phone' also covers any electronic device with the capacity to be used as a form of communication, either through the device itself or any applications stored on the device, such as tablets.

2. Permitted use of mobile phones

We regularly take photographs and videos of our children in action to aid in the recording of children's learning and development, and to be used for promotional purposes. These photographs/videos are all taken using Wildwood Nature School mobile phones and tablets.

The photos are generally used to upload onto the children's online learning journals. No photos will be taken of a child if consent has not been gained from the parents first.

Under no circumstances will these photographs be circulated outside the school, used for promotional purposes or posted on the website unless express permission is received in writing from parents/carers beforehand. The consent documentation is obtained and contained within our enrolment forms. Two different types of consent are sought from parents:

- Consent for use on school systems only e.g. reports to parents, to support written observations, for use on the Tapestry online learning journal
- Consent for use in marketing materials and for wider distribution

The Wildwood Nature School phones are for documenting children's learning and development, and safety and communication when out in the woods. These phones shall not be used for any purpose other than emergency calls or communication between staff members. No personal calls will be permitted whilst staff are on duty during school operating hours.

Only phones, tablets and cameras provided to staff by Wildwood Nature School can be used throughout the duration of the school day. Watches with camera or video functions should not be worn in school.

3. Children's mobile phones

At Wildwood Nature School, we understand that parents might want children to have their own mobile phones to ensure their safety if they are coming and going from school independently. Parents must sign a *Mobile Phone Parental Consent Form* before their child brings in a mobile phone.

Since mobile phones can be such a source of distraction for children, all mobile phones and devices must be switched off and handed in to the office when children arrive at school in the morning. If we are in the woods for the day, they should hand their mobile phone in to their key person who will store it securely in a waterproof backpack. Any mobile phone seen on a child during the school day will be immediately taken to the office until the end of the day.

Children will be handed back their mobile phones at the end of the day, or when they leave school. They must wait until they are off school property to turn their phones back on. If parents need to contact children during the school day in an emergency, they must do so via the school office phone.

4. Staff personal mobile phones

All personal phones belonging to members of staff must be kept in personal bags throughout the school day. No one should have their personal phone out in school and around children during the day. This protects staff from being distracted from their work and from allegations of inappropriate use.

Staff must never store parents', carers' or children's telephone numbers on their mobile phones and staff must never give their private mobile number to parents, carers or children. Staff should never take photos or videos of children on their personal mobile phones.

If staff have a break time during their working hours, they may use their mobile phones during these times in the staff room or an area of the woods where children are not present. In an emergency, staff needing to make a personal call during a lesson or whilst on duty should first ensure that adequate cover has been put in place and make the call in an area not used by children. Staff must give the school telephone number to their next of kin in case it is necessary for the staff member to be contacted, in an emergency, during working hours.

5. Parents, carers and visitors

We ask all parents not to use mobile phones in the school in areas where children are present. This includes all uses including, texting and photographing.

We recognise that many parents and carers use their mobile phone as a camera/video device to record their child at special performances e.g. class assemblies, concerts, etc. On these occasions the use of a phone is permitted for photographing/videoing only; images should only be taken by parents and carers if they include their own child and that the use of these images is for their own personal use and must not be uploaded for any internet use including Facebook or any other social networking sites or used in any form of publication unless they are solely of their own child. We recognise that children may inadvertently be included in photographs by another parents and therefore, are obliged to warn parents and carers of the legal and safeguarding risks of publishing such photographs on any platform. The placing of any photographs of children on social media is dangerous and parents may be in breach of the Data Protection Act if they upload photos of other children without the explicit consent of that child's parents.

Visitors and supply staff are not allowed to use personal mobile phones while in the school or in the woods and phones must be kept in their bags. Mobile phones can be used in areas where children are not present.

If a visitor, parent or carer is seen using their mobile phone, they will be asked politely to turn it off/desist from using it/remove it from children's view.

Policy review

Policy created: February 2023

Last reviewed:

Last modified:

Next review date: February 2025

Appendix 1

Mobile Phone Parental Consent Form

Dear Parent/Carer,

In accordance with our mobile phone policy, if your child is bringing in a mobile phone to school on a regular basis, please could you sign the form below to give your permission for your child to do this and remind them of our school policy.

- Your child needs to bring their phone to the school office first thing in the morning or hand it in to their key person if in the woods.
- Wildwood Nature School bears no responsibility for the loss or damage to a mobile phone.
- Your child's phone should be appropriately marked so that they can recognise it.
- Should your child be found using their phone inappropriately, the school reserves the right to withdraw this privilege and they will no longer be able to bring their phone into school.

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MOBILE PHONE PARENTAL CONSENT

I/we give permission for our child (name)

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to bring their mobile phone into school.

I/we have read the policy and understand its implications.

Signed:

Name:

Date:

PLEASE RETURN PERMISSION SLIP TO THE SCHOOL OFFICE. THANK YOU.