Mobile Phones and Smart Devices Policy

Big Creative Independent School (BCIS) is committed to providing a safe, calm and purposeful learning environment in which learners can engage fully in their education.

BCIS recognises that mobile phones can be important to learners and families, particularly for safety and communication when travelling to and from school. However, unrestricted access to mobile phones during the school day can distract from learning, disrupt lessons and relationships, contribute to bullying and safeguarding concerns, and affect learners' wellbeing. BCIS therefore operates as a **mobile phone-free environment during the school day**, subject to the individual exceptions and reasonable adjustments set out in this policy.

Statutory Guidance and Legal Framework

This policy has been developed with regard to the Department for Education's statutory guidance *Mobile phones in schools*, which became statutory on 29th June 2026 and should be followed by schools from 1st September 2026.

The DfE's expectation is that schools should be mobile phone-free environments by default and should have a policy prohibiting the use of mobile phones and other smart technology with similar functionality throughout the school day, including:

- lessons
- movement between lessons
- breaktimes and lunchtimes

The policy should be considered alongside other relevant legislation and statutory guidance, including:

- the Education and Inspections Act 2006
- the Education Act 1996
- the Equality Act 2010
- *Keeping Children Safe in Education*
- DfE *Behaviour in Schools* guidance
- DfE *Searching, Screening and Confiscation* guidance; and
- the Independent School Standards

BCIS will apply this policy consistently with its legal duties relating to safeguarding, equality, SEND and the welfare of learners.

Policy owner:	Approved by:	Date approved:	Review date:
BCIS Manager	Head of School	September 2026	September 2027

Scope

This policy applies to all BCIS learners during the school day while on the school site and during school activities where BCIS has responsibility for learners.

For the purposes of this policy, "mobile phones" includes smartphones and other personal communication or smart devices that BCIS determines have similar functionality, including devices capable of sending or receiving messages or notifications or recording audio, photographs or video.

Separate arrangements may be made for school trips and activities outside the normal school day following an assessment of the circumstances and safeguarding requirements.

BCIS Expectations

Learners may bring a mobile phone to BCIS so that they can use it when travelling to and from school. However, once on site, learners must not have access to or use their mobile phone during the school day unless an individual exception has been agreed by BCIS.

Learners are to turn off, and hand in their phones to reception upon arrival, and phones will be stored securely until learners leave at the end of the school day.

Once the phone has been handed in/stored in accordance with the school's arrangements, it will normally remain inaccessible to the learner until the end of their school day.

learners must not retain a second or alternative phone or smart device in order to circumvent these arrangements. If a second or alternative phone is discovered, this will be confiscated and the learner will face disciplinary action.

Contact Between Learners and Families

BCIS recognises the importance of communication between learners and their families.

Where a guardian needs to contact a learner urgently during the school day, they should contact BCIS. Staff will ensure that appropriate messages are passed to the learner or facilitate contact where necessary. The numbers to contact are as follows:

- BCIS Support: 07578 590 327
- BCIS Course Manager: 07575 053 994
- Reception: 020 3873 5800

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Where a learner needs to contact their guardian during the school day, staff will support them to do so where appropriate.
The school's mobile phone arrangements therefore do not prevent necessary communication between learners and their families.

Exceptions and Reasonable Adjustments
BCIS recognises that a blanket approach will not be appropriate in every circumstance.
The school will consider individual circumstances and make reasonable adjustments where required by the **Equality Act 2010**. A learner may, for example, need access to a mobile phone because of a disability or health-related need.
BCIS may also agree to an individual exception where there is a significant safeguarding, caring, family or other identified need.

Where an exception is agreed, wherever practicable it will specify:

- why access is required
- when the phone may be accessed
- where it may be used
- what it may be used for
- how the arrangement will be reviewed

An agreed exception does not necessarily mean unrestricted use of a mobile phone throughout the school day. Individual arrangements should be recorded where appropriate within the learner's **'Learner Support Profile'.**

Safeguarding and Online Safety
Mobile phones can create or contribute to safeguarding risks, including bullying, harassment, inappropriate communication, sharing of images, sexual harassment, exploitation and access to harmful or inappropriate online material.
learners will receive age-appropriate education about online safety, responsible use of technology and the potential impact of their online behaviour.
Where use or suspected use of a mobile phone raises a safeguarding concern, staff must follow the BCIS Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and report the matter to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy DSL.
Nothing in this policy should prevent a learner from reporting an online-safety or safeguarding concern to a member of staff.

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Recording, Photography and Filming

Learners must not use personal devices to photograph, film or make audio recordings of learners or staff during the school day unless this has been specifically authorised by a member of staff for an appropriate educational purpose.

Unauthorised recording, photographing or sharing of images or recordings may constitute a serious breach of the school's Behaviour Policy and may also constitute a safeguarding matter.

Breaches of the Policy

BCIS will respond to breaches consistently, proportionately and in accordance with its Behaviour Policy. Depending upon the circumstances, this may include:

- reminding the learner of the expectation
- requiring the phone or device to be turned off and handed to a member of staff
- confiscation for a proportionate period
- discussion with the learner
- informing or meeting with guardians
- reviewing individual behaviour or support arrangements
- applying an appropriate sanction under the Behaviour Policy.

Staff will consider the individual circumstances of the learner, including age, SEND, disability, safeguarding concerns and any agreed reasonable adjustments, when determining an appropriate response.

Repeated breaches will normally lead to a discussion with the learner and their guardian to identify why the arrangements are not working and what further support or action is required.

Confiscation

All members of the BCIS staff team may confiscate a mobile phone or similar device as a disciplinary response where this is lawful and proportionate.

Any confiscation will be undertaken in accordance with the school's Behaviour Policy and current DfE guidance. The length and arrangements for confiscation will be proportionate to the circumstances and intended disciplinary purpose.

Where there is reason to believe that inappropriate phone use may indicate that a learner is experiencing, or is at risk of, harm, staff will refer the matter to the DSL rather than treating it solely as a behaviour issue.

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Searching for Mobile Phones and Smart Devices

The BCIS Manager and members of staff authorised by the Head Teacher have statutory powers to search learners and their possessions in circumstances permitted by law.

BCIS identifies mobile phones and smart devices as items which may be searched for where possession or use is contrary to school rules.

Any search will be undertaken in accordance with the Education Act 1996, current DfE *Searching, Screening and Confiscation* guidance, the BCIS Behaviour Policy and safeguarding requirements.

Staff should not undertake a search simply because a learner is reluctant to surrender a device without first considering whether the search is lawful, necessary and proportionate.

Staff use of Mobile Phones

Staff are expected to model the behaviour expected from learners. Personal mobile phones should not normally be used by staff for personal purposes in front of learners during the school day. There may be legitimate professional reasons for staff to use a mobile phone or similar device, including authentication, school communications, safeguarding or emergency purposes. Such use should be appropriate and consistent with BCIS policies.

Staff must follow BCIS safeguarding, data protection and acceptable-use requirements concerning photography, recording and information relating to learners.

Supporting Learners to Understand the Policy

BCIS will explain the mobile phone arrangements to learners and ensure that expectations and consequences are clear.

learners will also be supported to understand why the school operates a mobile phone-free environment, including the benefits for:

- concentration and learning
- face-to-face relationships
- reducing distraction and disruption
- reducing opportunities for bullying and inappropriate recording
- online safety
- wellbeing

Expectations will be reinforced where necessary throughout the academic year.

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Parents and Carers (Guardians)

BCIS asks parents and carers to support the school's mobile phone arrangements and discuss them with their child.

Guardians should not normally contact their child directly on their mobile phone during the school day. Urgent communication should be made through the school.

Guardians should inform BCIS in writing if they believe their child has a disability, medical, safeguarding, caring or other significant individual need which may require an exception or adjustment to this policy.

Monitoring and Review

The BCIS Manager is responsible for ensuring that this policy is implemented consistently.

BCIS will monitor:

- compliance with the policy
- repeated or significant breaches
- safeguarding incidents involving mobile phones
- the effectiveness of agreed individual adjustments
- any emerging issues relating to technology or learner welfare

The policy will be reviewed at least annually and earlier where there are significant changes to legislation, statutory guidance, safeguarding requirements or the needs of the school.

Related BCIS policies

This policy should be read alongside:

- Behaviour Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Online Safety / Acceptable Use Policy
- SEND Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Searching and Confiscation arrangements
- Data Protection Policy
- Complaints Policy

DfE statutory guidance: Mobile phones in schools

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