Personal Electronic Devices (Including Mobile Phones) Policy

This policy has been produced in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and the Special Education Needs Disability Act 2001, the SEND Code of Practice 2014 and the Children and Families Act 2014. It has been reviewed in accordance with all other school policies and related Acts.

The Governors and staff of Lowton Church of England High School are committed to the provision of a high quality education in a Christian context. We aim to provide a school where we can live out our ethos of Caring, Learning and Succeeding on a daily basis. At the heart of the commitment is the notion of the uniqueness and infinite worth of the individual, that every person is valuable in the eyes of God.

Date effective from	1st September 2026
Date of last review	New policy
Review period	July 2027
Status	Approved
Person responsible	Deputy Headteacher
Version	3

Purpose and Rationale

Lowton Church of England High School is committed to providing a safe, orderly, and focused learning environment in which all pupils can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

From September 2026, the school is establishing a phone-free school day using the Yondr lockable pouch system. Pupils keep possession of their own devices, but those devices are secured in a personal pouch and cannot be accessed during the school day. This approach is designed to remove the distraction and risk associated with device use while pupils remain on site, and to support calm, purposeful learning and positive social interaction.

The school recognises that parents and carers may choose to provide pupils with personal electronic devices, including mobile phones, for reasons of safety and communication on the journey to and from school. However, the presence and use of such devices during the school day presents significant risks to:

- Safeguarding and child protection
- Data protection and privacy
- Pupil wellbeing and mental health
- Behaviour, focus, and learning
- The safety and dignity of pupils and staff

Evidence and national guidance highlight the role of personal electronic devices in facilitating cyberbullying and online harassment; sexting and the creation, possession, or distribution of indecent images; filming or photographing individuals without consent; and disruption to learning and the calm operation of the school.

This policy sets out the school's approach to the management, restriction, and enforcement of personal electronic devices in order to safeguard pupils and staff and promote high standards of behaviour. It should be read alongside the companion operational guidance, the school's Behaviour Policy and Yondr parental guidance document.

Definition of Personal Electronic Devices

For the purposes of this policy, personal electronic devices include any privately owned device brought onto the school site that is capable of communication, data storage, recording, or internet access. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Mobile phones and smartphones
- Smartwatches or wearable technology capable of calling, messaging, image capture, audio recording, or internet access
- Headphones, earbuds, or wireless listening devices
- Non-school-issued tablets or iPads
- Music players
- Handheld entertainment or gaming devices (for example, Nintendo Switch)
- Any device capable of photographing or filming, audio recording, accessing the internet or social media, or sending, receiving, or storing data

Legal Framework and Statutory Guidance

This policy has due regard to, and is informed by, the following legislation and statutory guidance (as amended):

Primary Legislation

- Education Act 1996
- Education Act 2002 (Sections 175 and 157 – safeguarding and promoting welfare)
- Education and Inspections Act 2006 (behaviour regulation and confiscation powers)
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- Equality Act 2010

Safeguarding and Behaviour Guidance

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, current version)
- Behaviour in Schools: Advice for Headteachers and School Staff (DfE)
- Searching, Screening and Confiscation: Advice for Schools (DfE, July 2022)
- Mobile Phones in Schools (DfE statutory guidance, updated 29 June 2026; schools to follow from 1st September 2026)

Data Protection and Online Safety

- UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- Data Protection Act 2018

- Malicious Communications Act 1988
- Communications Act 2003
- Protection of Children Act 1978
- Voyeurism (Offences) Act 2019

Under this framework, the school is legally entitled to regulate pupil behaviour, prohibit the use of personal electronic devices, and confiscate prohibited or banned items where necessary to maintain safety, discipline, and good order.

School Expectations

All pupils are required to secure their personal electronic devices in a Yondr pouch for the duration of the school day. The following expectations apply to every pupil:

1. Pupils must bring their Yondr pouch to school every day and are responsible for it at all times.
2. On arrival, pupils turn their phone off, open the pouch at the unlocking base, place the phone and any other wearable technology inside, and secure the pouch in front of school staff.
3. The pouch is then stored in the pupil's school bag and must remain closed and unopened for the whole school day.
4. At the end of the day, pupils unlock the pouch at the designated point on leaving the site and may then access their device.

Devices must remain secured in the pouch from the moment pupils enter the school site until they have unlocked at the designated point on leaving. This expectation applies before school, during lessons, during social times and transitions, and at the end of the school day until pupils have exited the site. Any use, visibility, or access to a personal electronic device outside the pouch during the school day constitutes a breach of this policy. Detailed daily procedures are set out in the companion operational guidance.

Pouches: Care, Loss, and Damage

Pupils are responsible for bringing their pouch to and from school each day and for keeping it in good condition. Pouches will be checked at line-up, and random checks will also take place.

Where a pupil forgets, loses, or damages their pouch, their phone will be confiscated and a sanction applied, which may include detention, internal exclusion, or suspension. A charge of £20 applies for a replacement pouch. The following are treated as damage:

- Ripped fabric, cuts, or tears
- A bent or cut pin
- Signs of force to the black button on the flap
- Damage to the black ball
- A pouch that opens without the unlocking station

- Drawing, decoration or graffiti.

Where damage is identified at a pouch check, it will be treated as intentional unless the pupil has reported it to the school beforehand.

Monitoring and Enforcement

The school applies this policy consistently and proportionately, in line with statutory guidance.

The expectations, confiscation, and sanctions in this policy apply equally to all personal electronic devices defined above, including smartwatches and other wearable technology, tablets, and any other internet-enabled device, and not only to mobile phones. Where a device cannot be secured in a Yondr pouch, for example a tablet, it must not be used or brought out during the school day and will be confiscated if seen, with the same sanctions applying.

- Pupils will be asked to demonstrate that their device is secured in the pouch at the start of the school day.
- Where a phone, smartwatch, earbuds, or other device is seen or accessed outside the pouch, the item will be confiscated and a consequence issued.
- A serious sanction will apply for an unpouched mobile phone on site, determined according to the individual circumstances. It is likely that the Headteacher will issue a one-day suspension.
- Confiscated phones are stored in the school safe and parents are notified by the school office. Parents may collect the phone. If a phone is not collected, it remains in school until the end of the week.
- Possession of a Yondr unlocking station, or a similar-strength magnet used to unlock pouches, is treated as a serious offence and may lead to suspension.

Searching, Screening, and Confiscation

Screening and searching for devices

All personal electronic devices are prohibited throughout the school day under the school's Behaviour Policy. This prohibition is required by the DfE's statutory Mobile phones in schools guidance, and this policy names all such devices as items that may be searched for.

- ***Screening.*** Screening a pupil with a hand-held metal detector is not a search. Any member of staff may screen any pupil, and screening needs neither the pupil's consent nor a member of staff of the same sex. A second member of staff will be present.
- ***Searching.*** Where staff have reasonable grounds to suspect a pupil has a device, the Headteacher, or staff authorised by the Headteacher, may search the pupil or their possessions without consent. A search of the pupil's person must be by a member of staff of the same sex, with a witness, and limited to outer clothing. Because these devices are banned by the school's rules rather than prohibited by law, reasonable force must never be used to search for a device.

Where a pupil claims not to have a device, a member of staff may screen them with a hand-held scanner in the presence of a second member of staff. Any physical search that then follows must meet the conditions below. Refusal to comply will be addressed through the Behaviour Policy.

The school will conduct searches, screening, and confiscation in line with the DfE guidance Searching, Screening and Confiscation: Advice for Schools and Keeping Children Safe in Education.

The following limits apply and must be observed by all staff:

Staff must follow these limits

The school identifies all personal electronic devices in this policy as items that may be searched for under the school's Behaviour Policy. Because these devices are banned by school rules rather than prohibited by law, the Headteacher, or staff authorised by the Headteacher, may search a pupil or their possessions without consent where they have reasonable grounds to suspect the pupil has such a device, but reasonable force must never be used to carry out that search. Staff should still seek the pupil's co-operation.

Only the Headteacher and staff authorised by the Headteacher may conduct a search.

A search of a pupil's person must be carried out by a member of staff of the same sex as the pupil, with a second authorised member of staff present as a witness, and may extend only to outer clothing.

Bag searches do not require a same-sex member of staff but still require reasonable grounds.

If a pupil refuses to co-operate, staff apply a sanction in line with the Behaviour Policy.

Where a device is confiscated, authorised staff may examine data or files on it only where they reasonably suspect it has been, or could be, used to cause harm, disrupt teaching, or break the school rules or the law. Anything they reasonably suspect is evidence of an offence must be given to the police as soon as reasonably practicable. Data or files may be deleted only where there is a good reason to do so, and never where the device is to be handed to the police.

Any nude or semi-nude image found on a device must not be viewed, copied, or shared, and must be referred immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

All searches are recorded, and reasonable adjustments are made for pupils with SEND or disabilities.

Refusal to Comply and Repeat Breaches

Refusal to comply

- Where a pupil refuses to secure or hand over a device, support will be called to assist.
- The pupil will be given time to reflect and comply.
- Continued refusal will result in escalated sanctions, which may include time in isolation or fixed-term suspension for defiance.

Repeat breaches

Repeated breaches may result in extended periods of confiscation, parental meetings, and withdrawal of permission to bring a personal electronic device onto the school site.

Communication During the School Day

Pupils are not permitted to use personal devices to contact home during the school day. If communication

home is required, pupils may ask the pastoral office to contact home on their behalf. Parents and carers should not contact pupils directly on their mobile phone during the school day and must instead contact the School Office.

If a pupil breaches this policy by using a mobile phone to contact home during the school day, please instruct your child to seek appropriate support and end the call, and contact the School Office if you feel your child needs assistance.

Expectations of Parents and Carers

Parents and carers are expected to:

- Support and reinforce this policy and ensure pupils understand the expectations and consequences.
- Ensure their child brings their Yondr pouch to school every day and understands their responsibility to keep it in good condition.
- Meet the £20 replacement charge where a pouch is lost or damaged.
- Work in partnership with the school where breaches occur.
- Contact the School Office, rather than their child directly, if they need to reach their child during the school day.

Exceptions to the Policy

Medical and health-related needs

Pupils with a diagnosed medical condition that relies on access to a mobile phone will be issued with a Velcro pouch. These pupils follow the same daily checks as other pupils but retain access to their device for their medical need. Any misuse outside the agreed provision will be treated as a breach of this policy.

Pupils who do not have a mobile phone

Where a pupil does not own or does not bring a mobile phone to school, parents will be asked to sign a declaration to this effect. The pupil will be issued with a pouch and a pass to denote that they do not bring a phone to school, so that they take part in the daily routine without being singled out.

Pupils with SEND

Reasonable adjustments will be made for pupils with SEND under the Equality Act 2010. Any adjustment will be made on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the SENDCo.

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed regularly by senior leaders and governors to ensure it remains compliant with statutory guidance, effective in safeguarding pupils, and consistent with the school's Behaviour and Safeguarding policies. Given the introduction of the Yondr system, the first review is scheduled within one year of the policy taking effect

Linked Documents:
Standard Operating Procedures
Behaviour Policy
Going Phone-Free with Yondr Pouches - A guide for parents and carers

This policy, sets out the school's general approach and procedures. It is not intended to be exhaustive and cannot anticipate every circumstance that may arise. In situations not explicitly covered, or where exceptional circumstances apply, the Headteacher has the discretion to take such action as they consider reasonable and appropriate, consistent with the aims and principles underpinning this policy.