THE BARLOW
RC HIGH SCHOOL

SERVE · PRAY · ACHIEVE · RESPECT

Rise up,
take courage,
and do it.

Mobile Phone Policy

Mission Statement

As a Catholic school, our mission is to show love through our respect for others.

We value our God-given gifts, talents and abilities.
Our aim is to bring out the best in everyone, within a safe and happy environment.

Everyone should know that we are followers of God by what we do, not just by what we say.

RATIFIED BY GOVERNING BODY	**June 2026**
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1. Introduction and Aims

At The Barlow RC High School, we recognise that mobile phones and similar devices, including smartphones, are an important part of everyday life for our pupils, parents/carers and staff, as well as the wider school community. However, we also recognise the detrimental impact mobile phone usage and excessive screentime has on young people and therefore, through our Mobile Phone Policy, aim to ban the use of mobile phones on school site, supporting pupils to disconnect from their smart devices in order to reconnect with their peers and staff in school. In line with DfE guidance (2026), the school operates as a mobile phone-free environment by default and mobile phones must not be used, accessed, or visible anywhere on school site at any time.

Our policy aims to:

- Promote a policy of disconnect to reconnect, where pupils are engaging with each other rather than smart devices, leading to increased behaviour, engagement, and wellbeing.
- Eliminate distraction from learning caused by mobile phones.
- Prevent misuse of smart devices, including bullying, filming, upskirting, and academic dishonesty.
- Create a safer school environment and reduce safeguarding risks.
- Reinforce a calm and focused school culture through consistent rules.
- Mitigate the risk of data protection issues.

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Anti-Bullying Policy.
- Child-on-Child Abuse Policy.
- Behaviour Policy.
- Safeguarding Policy.
- Complaints Policy.
- Data Protection Policy.
- Online Safety Policy.
- Acceptable Use of IT Policy.
- Staff Code of Conduct.

Note: throughout this policy, 'mobile phones' refers to mobile phones and similar smart devices.

2. Relevant Guidance and Research

Guidance

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation, statutory guidance and good practice guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- DfE 'Mobile phones in schools'
- DfE 'Behaviour in Schools'
- DfE 'Keeping children safe in education 2025'
- DfE 'Searching, screening and confiscation at school'
- The Data Protection Act 2018
- The UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- The Voyeurism (Offences) Act 2019
- The Protection of Children Act 1978
- The Sexual Offences Act 2003
- DfE 'Cyberbullying: Advice for Headteachers and school staff'

Research

Research has shown that the effect of banning mobile phones in school can be very positive. Some research has suggested that banning mobile phones in schools adds up to the equivalent of an extra week's schooling over a child's academic year. This research was completed by Louis Philippe Beland and Richard Murphy, and published by the Centre for Economic Performance at the London School of Economics. Beland and Murphy found that after schools banned mobile phones, the test scores of pupils aged 16 improved by 6.4%. Their research found that the ban had a greater positive impact on pupils with special education needs and those eligible for free school meals. It is also evidenced that improved behaviour, particularly linked to online conduct and bullying, are reduced when mobile phones are banned in school.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

The Governing Board will be responsible for:

- Holding the Headteacher and Senior Pastoral Team accountable for the implementation of the policy.
- Reviewing the policy annually.

The Senior Leadership Team will be responsible for:

- The day-to-day implementation and management of the policy.
- Evaluating the effectiveness of the policy and procedures.
- Handling complaints regarding this policy as outlined in the school's Complaints Policy.
- Communicating this policy to the relevant staff members and the wider school community.
- Communicating what devices can be brought to school and when they can and cannot be used.
- Ensuring consistency and adherence to the policy by school staff.

All staff will be responsible for:

- Ensuring pouch use on entry to the school in the morning, including visual checks and supervised locking so that the ban on mobile phone use in school is adhered to by pupils.
- Conducting spot checks during the day if misuse is suspected.
- Reporting damage, missing pouches or misuse to the Senior Pastoral Team.
- Confiscating mobile phones from pupils where they are seen using them on school site and reporting this to the Senior Pastoral Team.
- Unlocking pouches at the end of the day (if they hold an unlocking station).

The Pastoral Team will be responsible for:

- Initiating and managing responses to serious incidents of child-on-child abuse and any other misconduct that could be considered illegal regarding mobile phone use, in line with the Behaviour, Safeguarding and Child-on-Child Abuse Policies.
- Liaising with and reporting the relevant information to children's social care and/or the police, when it is necessary to do so.

Pupils are responsible for:

- Bringing their phone pouches to school every day and using them without exception.
- Placing their phone and any smartwatches in their pouch in line with this policy.
- Keeping their pouch secure and undamaged.
- Following all staff instructions regarding pouch use.
- Not bringing in school, or using, any item intended to bypass the system (e.g., second phone, magnets).
- Not damaging or defacing their pouch – this will be treated as deliberate misconduct.

Parents and Carers are responsible for

- Ensuring their child brings their pouch to school each day.
- Reinforcing the message that phones must not be used during the school day.
- Accepting that any damage to a pouch, or if a pouch is lost, will need to be replaced by them.
- Using the school reception as the point of contact in emergencies – pupils are not contactable during the day via their own devices.

4. Use of Mobile Phones by Staff

4.1 Personal Mobile Phones

Staff (including volunteers, contractors and anyone else otherwise engaged by the school), are not permitted to use their mobile phone for personal business, during contact time. The use of mobile phones for personal business, must be restricted to non-contact time, and to areas of the school where pupils are not present (such as the staffroom).

There may be circumstances in which it's appropriate for a member of staff to have use of their phone during contact time for personal reasons. For instance (this list is non-exhaustive):

- For emergency contact by their child, or their child's school.
- In the case of acutely ill dependents or family members.

The Headteacher will decide on a case-by-basis whether to allow for special arrangements.

If special arrangements are not deemed necessary, school staff can use the school office number 0161 445 8053 as a point of emergency contact.

4.2 Data Protection

Staff must not use their personal mobile phones to process personal data, or any other confidential school information, including entering such data into generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools such as chatbots (e.g., ChatGPT and Google Bard). Further information on data protection can be found in the school's Data Protection Policy, the Online Safety Policy and the Acceptable Use of IT Policy.

4.3 Safeguarding

Staff must not give their personal contact details to parents/carers or pupils, including connecting through social media and messaging apps.

Staff must avoid publicising their contact details on any social media platform or website, to avoid unwanted contact by parents/carers or pupils.
Further information on data protection can be found in the school's Online Safety Policy, the Acceptable Use of IT Policy and the Staff Code of Conduct.

Staff must not use their personal mobile phones to take photographs or recordings of pupils, their work, or anything else that could identify a pupil. If it's necessary to take photos or recordings as part of a lesson/school trip/activity, this must be done using school equipment.

4.4 Using Personal Mobiles for Work Purposes

In some circumstances, it may be appropriate for staff to use personal mobile phones for work. Such circumstances may include, but are not limited to:

- Issuing homework, rewards or sanctions.
- Use of multi-factor authentication.
- Emergency evacuations.
- Supervising off-site trips.
- Supervising residential visits.

In the event of a member of staff leading an off-site trip or residential visit, the school will provide them with a school mobile so that there is no necessity for them to make their personal contact details available to pupil and parents/carers. This will allow safe and appropriate communication between staff and pupils and staff and parents/carers within this context.

4.5 Work phones

Some members of staff are provided with a mobile phone by the school for work purposes.

Only authorised staff are permitted to use school phones, and access to the phone must not be provided to anyone without authorisation.

Staff must:

- Only use phone functions for work purposes, including making/receiving calls, sending/receiving emails or other communications, or using the internet.
- Ensure that communication or conduct linked to the device is appropriate and professional at all times, in line with our Staff Code of Conduct.

4.6 Sanctions

Staff that fail to adhere to this policy may face disciplinary action. Stakeholders should see the school's staff Disciplinary Policy for more information.

5. Use of Mobile Phones by Pupils

In line with Department for Education guidance, the principle of disconnect to reconnect and our commitment to safeguarding and learning, pupils will **no longer be permitted to use mobile phones at any point while on school premises**. To support this, we are implementing **secure lockable phone pouches** for every pupil.

5.1 Use of Smartwatches by Pupils

The DfE's non-statutory mobile phone guidance includes in the term 'mobile phones' all devices with communications and smart technology that the school chooses to include in their policy.

Smartwatches are wristwatches with smart technology in them. They can be used to tell the time, send and receive text and voice messages, make calls and listen to music. Some smart watches have wellness and health-related features.

In line with Department for Education guidance, principle of disconnect to reconnect and our commitment to safeguarding and learning, pupils will **no longer be permitted to use smart watches at any point while on school premises**. These must be locked away in the secure lockable pouch provided for a pupil, alongside their mobile phone.

5.2 Exceptions for Specific Health Conditions

The school may permit pupils to use a mobile phone in school, due to exceptional circumstances such as to monitor a health condition such as diabetes. This will be considered on a case-by-case basis. To request such permission, pupils or parents/carers should contact Mrs R Seddon, Assistant Headteacher.

Any pupils who are given special permission due to exceptional circumstances must then adhere to the school's permission form allowing a pupil to bring their phone to school due to exceptional circumstances (see Appendix 1).

5.3 Sanctions

Mobile phones will be confiscated if seen in school. Schools are permitted to confiscate phones from pupils under sections 91 and 94 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

As aforementioned, pupils who are in breach of this policy will receive the following sanctions in line with the schools' Behaviour Policy and ladder of consequences:

Breach type	Sanction
No phone pouch on entry to school.	N4 sanction and phone confiscated
Phone/smart watch not placed in pouch	N5 sanction (Suspension or Off-Site Directive)
Vandalism or damage to pouch	N5 sanction (Suspension or Off-Site Directive)
Persistent non-compliance	N5 sanction (Suspension or Off-Site Directive)

All phones confiscated will be kept in the school office. All phones will be kept for the week unless the parent/carer comes in to school to collect the phone. If parents/carers choose to do this, they will only be able to collect the mobile phone at the end of the school day between 3.30 and 4pm.

Staff have the power to search pupils' phones in specific circumstances, as set out in the DfE's guidance on searching, screening and confiscation. The DfE guidance allows you to search a pupil's phone if there is a good reason to do so (such as having reason to believe the phone contains pornographic images, or if it is being/has been used to commit an offence or cause harm to another person).

If a pupil, parent/carer or member of staff finds inappropriate content on a mobile phone, they should report it to the DSL or DDSL.

Where this policy is breached, in each case the school will also consider whether:
There are any relevant special circumstances (for example, age, religious requirements, special educational needs, disability).

The pupil's behaviour may indicate they may be suffering, or at risk of, harm. If this is suspected, staff will follow the appropriate procedure set out in Part 1 of Keeping Children Safe in Education.

Certain types of conduct, bullying or harassment can be classified as criminal conduct. The school takes such conduct extremely seriously and will involve the police or other agencies as appropriate. Such conduct includes, but is not limited to:

- Sexting (consensual and non-consensual sharing nude or semi-nude images or videos).
- Upskirting.
- Threats of violence or assault.
- Abusive calls, emails, social media posts or texts directed at someone on the basis of someone's ethnicity, religious beliefs or sexual orientation.

All concerns linked to mobile phone usage or content should be shared with the pupil's Head of Year, Director of Key Stage, the DSL and the Anti-bullying Lead in school. All concerns linked to potential child-on-child abuse or other online safety or safeguarding concerns must be logged on CPOMS in a timely fashion.

Searching Pupils

School pupils have a right for their private life to be respected under article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). This right is not absolute, and the school can interfere with this right as long as it is justified, proportionate, and aligns with the powers to search in the Education Act 1996.

All searches will be conducted in line with the school's Behaviour Policy.

The Headteacher, and other authorised staff members, will have the power to search a pupil or their possessions where they have reasonable grounds to suspect that a pupil is in possession of a prohibited item. Mobile phones and similar devices will be deemed prohibited items that may be searched for in line with the Behaviour Policy. Mobile phones are treated as banned items under school rules and may be searched for under these powers.

In all cases there will be two members of staff, who will always:

- Seek the co-operation of the pupil before conducting a search.
- Ensure the pupil understands the reason for the search and how it will be conducted.
- Give the pupil the opportunity to ask any questions so that their agreement is informed.
- Have due regard to the DfE's 'Searching, screening and confiscation' guidance.

Staff may search a pupil's outer clothing, pockets, possessions, desks or lockers. Staff conducting a search must not require the pupil to remove any clothing other than outer clothing - outer clothing means any item of clothing that is not worn wholly next to the skin or immediately over a garment that is being worn as underwear and includes hats, shoes, boots or scarves. Possessions means any goods over which the pupil has or appears to have control - this includes lockers and bags. When searching for mobile phones and other prohibited items, staff at the school will use a wand to detect these items on a pupil's person as part of a non-contact search if required, as part of a proportionate response – this will be done maintaining the dignity of the pupil being searched and in as non-invasive a way as possible.

A staff member may ask a pupil to show them what they are doing on their mobile phone or smart device if they reasonably believe that the pupil is using the device to cause harm. If it is judged reasonable, the staff member may inspect the files or data on a pupil's electronic device and delete them if necessary.

Staff members will ensure they have a good reason to examine and delete data on a pupil's electronic device. When determining a good reason to examine data, staff members will ensure they reasonably suspect that the data has been, or could be, used to cause harm, undermine the safe environment of the school and disrupt teaching, or be used to commit an offence.

When determining a good reason to delete data, staff members will consider whether the material found may constitute evidence relating to a suspected offence and if so, choose not to delete the data. The data may be deleted if it is found likely to cause harm to any person, and the pupil and/or parent/carer refuses to delete the data themselves. The reason to delete data from a pupil's mobile phone will always be a proportionate one and if the data is evidence of a crime, the phone will be confiscated but the data will not be deleted.

If a search uncovers a device that is being used to cause harm, or which contains prohibited material such as pornography, a staff member can confiscate the device. If a staff member finds child pornography, it must be given to the police as soon as reasonably practicable. Where staff find stolen items like mobile devices, they must be given to the police as soon as reasonably practicable.

The staff member conducting the search must be the same sex as the pupil being searched. A witness to the search must be present; this should also be a staff member of the same sex as the pupil being searched.

Pupils will be expected to comply - refusal may result in sanctions, but staff will follow DfE guidance to ensure actions remain lawful and proportionate.

Pupils are required to comply with any request to disable the screen lock function of their electronic device and show any staff member what they are doing. Any pupil who refuses to comply with these requests will be disciplined in line with the Behaviour Policy.

At The Barlow, the ban on mobile phones for pupils and the use of lockable mobile phone pouches helps to mitigate the necessity to perform the searches outlined above and supports the safeguarding of young people.

6. Use of Mobile Phones by Parents/Carers, Volunteers and Visitors

Parents/carers, visitors and volunteers (including governors and contractors) must adhere to this policy as it relates to staff if they are on the school site during the school day.

This means:

- Not taking pictures or recordings of pupils, unless it's at a public event (such as a school fair), or of their own child.
- Using any photographs or recordings for personal use only, and not posting on social media without consent.
- Not using phones in lessons, or when working with pupils.

Parents/carers, visitors and volunteers will be informed of the rules for mobile phone use when they sign in at reception or attend a public event at school. All visitors to the school during the school day will be provided with a copy of the welcome booklet, which outlines to them key members of the school's Senior Leadership Team that they need to know, including the school's DSL, the expectations placed upon them as visitors to the school and how to raise any safeguarding concerns whilst in attendance at the school.

Parents/carers or volunteers supervising school trips or residential visits must not:

- Use their phone to make contact with other parents/carers.
- Take photos or recordings of pupils, their work, or anything else that could identify a pupil.

Parents/carers or volunteers supervising trips are also responsible for enforcing the school's policy for pupils using their phones or smart devices, as set out in section 5 above, but must refer any sanctions to a member of staff, as they do not have the power to search or confiscate devices.

Parents/carers must use the school office as the first point of contact if they need to get in touch with their child during the school day. They must not try to contact their child on their personal mobile during the school day as their child's mobile phone must be switched off and contained within their lockable pouch.

7. Loss, theft or damage

The school accepts no responsibility for mobile phones that are lost, damaged or stolen on school premises or transport, during school visits or trips, or while pupils are travelling to and from school. While mobile phones must not be used by pupils at The Barlow, we know that some pupils may wish to use them on the way to and from school. If pupils do bring their mobile phone to school, it should be switched off and placed in their phone pouch on entry to the school site. The pouch must then be locked in sight of a member of staff. Pupils will be able to unlock their phone pouch on exiting the school site, or earlier if deemed necessary by a member of school staff for investigatory or safeguarding reasons. Pupils must secure their mobile phones as much as possible, including using passwords or pin codes to protect access to the phone's functions.

Confiscated phones will be stored securely in the school office. Staff will be protected against liability in any proceedings brought against them for any loss or damage to personal devices that have been confiscated as an appropriate sanction, provided that they have acted lawfully.

Lost phones should be returned to Pupil Services. The school will then attempt to contact the owner.

8. Monitoring and review

The school is committed to ensuring that this policy has a positive impact on pupils' education, behaviour and welfare. When reviewing the policy, the school will take into account:

- Feedback from parents/carers and pupils.
- Feedback from staff.
- Records of behaviour and safeguarding incidents.
- Relevant advice from the Department for Education, the local authority and any other relevant organisations.

If there are any concerns regarding this policy, these should be brought to the attention of the Senior Pastoral Team in a timely manner.

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Governors

Appendix: 1

THE BARLOW RC HIGH SCHOOL

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Permission form allowing a pupil to bring their phone to school due to exceptional circumstances

Pupil Details	
Pupil name:	
Year group/class:	
Parent/carer(s) name(s):	

- The school has agreed to allow [pupil name] to bring [their] mobile phone to school because they [insert reason here]_____.
- Pupils who bring a mobile phone to school must agree only to use their mobile phone under supervision of school staff and for the purpose agreed on this form.
- The school reserves the right to revoke permission if a pupil does not abide by this agreement.

Parent/carer signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Pupil signature: _____ **Date:** _____

For school use only	
Authorised by:	
Date:	

Appendix: 2

THE BARLOW RC HIGH SCHOOL

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Mobile Phone Contract

Name of Pupil:		**Family Group:**	

Date	

This contract is between _____ (pupil), _____ (parent/carer) and The Barlow RC High School.

Conduct of the pupil's behaviours in school, linked to their mobile phone, have been discussed in the meeting and it has been agreed that the pupil:

-
-
-

Support Identified:

Additional Notes:

It has been clearly outlined to both the parent and pupil that if_____ engages in any of the behaviour outlined above, that they will receive a suspension from school. Further advice will be sought by the school if this continues to be an issue moving forward.

Signed by:

Pupil:		**Date:**	
Parent:		**Date:**	
School:		**Date:**	