St John and St Nicolas Schools Federation

For the good of all through curiosity, creativity and love

Policy Title:	**Mobile Phone Policy**
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Contact:	governors@stjohnandstnicolasschools.org.uk
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1.3				
1.4				

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St John and St Nicolas Schools Federation
Mobile Phone Policy

At St John and St Nicolas Schools Federation, our vision is 'For the good of all – through curiosity, creativity and love.' This vision inspires everything that the federation does.
It applies equally to all the federation's policies with the intention that our policies impact as fairly and positively as possible to meet the needs of all members of our schools' community.

1. Introduction

Mobile phones, including all electronic devices with imaging and sharing capabilities, alongside other forms of technology are changing the way and speed in which we communicate. They can provide security and reassurance; there are, however, also associated risks. Children and young people as well as staff need to understand these risks in order to help them develop appropriate strategies for keeping themselves safe. As with e-safety issues generally, risks to children and young people can be broadly categorised under the headings of content, contact and conduct and managed by reducing availability, restricting access and increasing resilience.

2. Aim

The aim of the Mobile Phone Policy is to promote safe and appropriate practice for staff and children through establishing clear and robust acceptable use guidelines.
This is achieved through balancing protection against potential misuse with the recognition that mobile phones are effective communication tools - which in turn can contribute to safeguarding practice and protection.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all individuals who have access to personal or work-related mobile phones on site. This includes practitioners (both staff and external professionals), volunteers, committee members, children, young people, parents, carers, visitors and community users. This list is not exhaustive.

4. Policy statement

It is recognised that it is the enhanced functions of many mobile phones that cause the most concern, and which are most susceptible to misuse. Misuse includes the taking and distribution of indecent images, exploitation and bullying.

It is also recognised that 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 on 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 all.

It is appreciated that it can be very 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.

5. Code of conduct

A code of conduct is promoted with the aim of creating a cooperative workforce, where staff work as a team, have high values and respect each other; thus creating a strong morale and sense of commitment leading to increased productivity.

It is therefore ensured that all practitioners:

- have a clear understanding of what constitutes misuse
- know how to minimise risk
- avoid putting themselves into compromising situations which could be misinterpreted and lead to possible allegations
- understand the need for professional boundaries and clear guidance regarding acceptable use
- are responsible for self-moderation of their own behaviours
- are aware of the importance of reporting concerns promptly

It is fully recognised that studies consistently indicate that imposing rigid regulations and/or 'bans' on the actions of others can be counterproductive, leading to a culture of suspicion, uncertainty and secrecy.

The imposition of rigorous, inflexible rules is therefore avoided, unless the potential risks of not enforcing them far out-weigh the benefits. An agreement of trust is therefore promoted

regarding the carrying and use of mobile phones within the setting environment, which is agreed to by all practitioners.

6. Procedures

The federation recognises that mobile phones are a useful tool for taking photo images of groups of children undertaking activities that are downloaded for display, or as evidence of curriculum activities.

Members of staff may take photographs on mobile phones in the presence of another member of staff. Using a federation owned device is always preferable. Photographs must be downloaded and wiped from the phone before the member of staff leaves the school building or as soon as possible during/after an offsite activity.

7. Personal mobiles

Effective guidance is in place to avoid the use of mobile phones causing unnecessary disruptions and distractions within the workplace, and to ensure effective safeguarding practice is promoted to protect against potential misuse.

In the interests of equality, and to further promote safety, the guidance applies to any individual who has a mobile phone on site, including children, parents and visitors, as detailed below:

Practitioners are permitted to have their mobile phones about their person; however, there is a clear expectation that all personal use is limited to allocated lunch and/or tea breaks. Other than in agreed exceptional circumstances, phones must be switched off or put on silent and calls and texts must not be taken or made during work time.

Practitioners are not permitted to use their own personal phones for contacting children, young people and their families within or outside of the setting, unless there are exceptional circumstances of which the headteacher or a senior member of staff is aware.

If practitioners are using their personal mobile phone for sending or receiving work related emails, they should ensure that the phone is password protected to ensure security of data in the event of the phone being lost or stolen.

Children are not permitted to have their phone about their person. The phone must be handed into the office at the start of the day and collected at the end of the day. The phone must be switched off or put on silent. This also applies to after school activities.

Parents, visitors and contractors are respectfully requested not to use their mobile phones in any area where children are present. Should phone calls and/or texts need to be taken or made, use is restricted to those areas not accessed by children in order to avoid any unnecessary disturbance or disruption to others e.g. the staffroom or school office.
Any individual bringing a personal device into the setting must ensure that it contains no inappropriate or illegal content.

8. Work mobile

The use of a designated work mobile is promoted as it is:

- an essential part of the emergency toolkit which is taken on off-site trips
- an effective communication aid, enabling text, email messages and calls to be made and received
- a back-up facility should problems be experienced with the landline – or where contact needs to be made outside of work hours

Effective security measures are in place to safeguard against any potential misuse. Only authorised individuals have access to the work mobile, which is stored securely when not in use.

Personal calls are not permitted to be made on the work mobile, other than in agreed exceptional circumstances. Contact or calls can be made via the work mobile in the event of an emergency.

Driving: if any practitioner is required to drive in a working capacity, and has responsibility for the work mobile, the phone must be switched off whilst driving. It is strongly recommended that practitioners follow the same procedures regarding their own personal mobile phones.
Under no circumstances should practitioners drive whilst taking a phone call. This also applies to hands-free and wireless connections, which are considered a distraction rather than a safer alternative.

9. Safe storage

A designated safe and secure area for practitioners to store their personal belongings during the working day is available (classroom cupboards). Practitioners have the **option** to store their mobile phones in this area, should they choose. This however is not a mandatory requirement.

Practitioners leave their belongings in safe storage at their own risk. It is therefore recommended that phones are security marked, password protected and insured. No liability for loss or damage is accepted.

As well as safeguarding children and avoiding any unnecessary disruptions during the day, this procedure also aims to protect staff against any unfounded allegations.

10. Emergency Contact

It is recognised that mobile phones provide direct contact to others, and at times provide a necessary reassurance due to their ease of access, particularly at stressful times.

Practitioners, therefore, in agreed exceptional circumstances are permitted to keep the volume of their phone switched on. This is to enhance their own well-being and peace of mind, to reduce stress and worry and to enable them to concentrate more effectively on their work.

Such use will be for an agreed limited period only, until any concerns or issues leading to the exceptional circumstance request have been resolved.

It is ensured at all times that the landline telephone remains connected and operational, except in circumstances beyond control. This means that it is available for emergency/urgent contact at all times.

The reliance on an answer phone is avoided except for times outside of the setting operating hours or should children be taken off the premises on a trip. The answer phone is always checked promptly on opening or return.