

Frederick Gough School - Position Statement on Mobile Phones

Frederick Gough School recognises the Department for Education's non-statutory guidance that schools should be mobile-phone-free environments by default. We fully understand the rationale behind this guidance and agree with its core aims: protecting learning time, reducing distraction, preventing harm, and safeguarding pupils' wellbeing.

However, our professional judgement — informed by our context, culture and evidence — is that education, responsibility and ownership are more effective than prohibition alone.

Mobile phones are now an integral part of pupils' lives. Removing them entirely from the school day does not remove their influence; it simply shifts responsibility elsewhere.

In our context, we believe it is more effective in the long term development of young people to educate pupils in how to use technology responsibly, safely and respectfully, alongside clear boundaries and consequences.

At Frederick Gough School, the overwhelming majority of pupils meet expectations regarding mobile phone use. Our Class Charts data shows that mobile-phone-related sanctions are rare and form a very small proportion of overall behaviour incidents.

Behaviour outcomes remain strong, with suspensions consistently in the lowest third of the local authority, despite being the largest secondary school locally serving a socioeconomically diverse community with a high number of pupils with SEND, many of whom come with SEMH needs.

We work with parents and guardians to take responsibility for mobile-related safeguarding issues, including online safety, social media misuse, bullying, peer-on-peer harm and reporting concerns, rather than assuming these risks sit outside the school's remit and this is clear in our behaviour policy.

This approach reflects wider strategic decisions within the school. For example, we retain a full lunchtime where many schools have reduced it, not because it is easier, but because education, supervision and strong relationships have proven more effective than removal. The same principle underpins our approach to mobile phones.

Our policy is deliberately educational and is underpinned by a strong culture of mutual respect rather than authoritarian compliance. Expectations are shared explicitly and annually with our pupils who sign a mobile phone contract and underpinned through PSHE, assemblies, curriculum content and daily interactions. Clear expectations are matched with clear consequences and consistent follow-through. Trust is placed in pupils, matched by firm accountability when that trust is breached.

This includes a non-negotiable expectation that mobile phones are switched off and in school bags during lessons, unless explicitly allowed by a member of staff for a defined educational purpose. Those without a school bag will need to hand their phones to the teacher for the lesson. Where misuse occurs, sanctions are applied clearly and consistently in line with the school's Positive Behaviour Policy.

Our aim is not convenience, but character development — ensuring pupils leave Frederick Gough School able to regulate their behaviour, act responsibly and make safe choices in the real world, not just comply within the walls of the school.