

Appendix: - Phone-free School policy statement

Mobile Phone Use: Effective from Monday 15th June 2026

Purpose

This document explains the rationale and approach that the school will take to ensure Northstowe Secondary College is a truly phone-free school. We believe that this is important so that we:

- support the mental health and wellbeing of our students by guaranteeing them more than six phone-free hours each day.
- provide a high-quality learning environment in which disruption and distraction due to devices is eliminated.
- give students the freedom to socialise and play without the distractions of devices during the school day.

Relationship to other school policies and government guidance

This document should not be read in isolation as it links with many of the school's other policies, including, but not limited to the:

- Behaviour Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Home-School Agreement
- Equalities Guidelines and Action Plan
- Meridian Trust Anti-bullying Policy
- Meridian Trust Physical Restraint and Restrictive Interventions Policy

Alongside this, this document has been drafted with reference to the following Department for Education and UK Government documents and statutory guidance:

Mobile phones in schools: Guidance for schools on prohibiting the use of mobile phones throughout the school day (February 2024)

Searching, Screening and Confiscation: Advice for schools (April 2022)

Keeping children safe in education (September 2024)

Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years: Statutory guidance for organisations which work with and support children and young people who have special educational needs or disabilities (January 2015)

Prevent Duty Guidance: England and Wales (2023)

Definitions

Phone - Any device which can make or receive telephone calls

Smart watch - Any watch that can be connected to a phone via a wireless connection e.g. Bluetooth, examples include, but are not limited to, Apple Watch, Samsung Galaxy Watch, Garmin, Fitbit

Headphones – Any headphones or ear buds whether connected to a phone by cable or by wireless or Bluetooth connection

Devices – any form of mobile phone, smart watch, or headphones

Entry points – the main gate on Stirling Road adjacent to Martin Bacon School and NLC main reception on Stirling Road.

Operation of the ‘Pouch’ Approach

All students will be provided with a ‘Hush’ pouch by the school, which they must bring to school with them each day.

All students must place their phone or phones, smart watch and headphones in their pouch before they cross a school entry point and show the member of staff on duty at that entry point that they have done this and locked the pouch.

Students should turn all devices off before placing them in the pouch.

Students are expected to keep the pouch in their possession throughout the school day, in either their pocket, bag, or locker.

Unlocking devices will be available to students at the school’s exit points (which are the same as the entry points) from 3:10pm each day.

Unless required by the extra-curricular activity, students’ devices will remain locked whilst attending extra-curricular activities. At the end of their activity, they may unlock their pouches.

Students attending detentions after school may only unlock their pouches after their detention.

All pouches will be numbered, and a register of pouches will be held by the school.

Students should label their pouch with their preferred first and surname for identification.

The pouch remains the property of the school.

Any damage must be reported, and any deliberate damage or inappropriate customisation will result in a consequence in line with the school’s behaviour policy and a replacement must be paid for by the student and/or family. This cost will be added to the student’s MCAS account.

Reasonable Adjustments

Where a student has a specific medical need, which requires them to have access to their phone, they will be provided with a Velcro medical pouch in which to store their devices. Evidence of need must be provided from a medical professional.

Consequences

The expectation is that all devices are stored in the student's pouch and that no phone, headphones or smart watch are seen throughout the school day.

From September 2026: If a student chooses not to follow this expectation and a phone, headphones or/and a smart watch is seen, then the devices will be confiscated for 7 days. This means that a device confiscated on a Monday can be collected by the student at the end of the school day on the following Monday.

Where a collection day will fall in the school holidays or on a Bank Holiday, the student will be allowed to collect their device at the end of the school day on the final day of term or the final day before the Bank Holiday.

In the event of a confiscation and in response to a request from a parent/carers, the school will either return the SIM card to the parent/carers or loan a basic mobile phone that lacks the advanced functionality of a smartphone, or both. This is to support parent/carers in the safeguarding of their children.

Similarly, in response to a request from a parent/carers, we will endeavour to loan a device to allow a student to complete homework, if there is no other device in the household.

For remainder of this academic year only (15th June to 17th July 2026): We recognise that students and their parents/carers will be learning about our new approach during the first seven weeks of implementation. If a student chooses not to follow the expectation and a phone, headphones or/and a smart watch is seen, then the students' devices will be confiscated until the end of the next school day. This means that a device confiscated on a Monday can be collected by the student at the end of the school day on Tuesday. For devices confiscated on a Friday, the student will be able to collect this at the end of their Principal's Detention on that day.

Loss or replacement of the pouch

A pouch will last a student the five years that they attend Northstowe Secondary College. The school will replace the pouch if it stops working effectively due to a manufacturing defect.

Where the pouch is either lost or no longer functions as a result of misuse or deliberate damage, then the student and their parents/carers will be liable for the replacement of the pouch at a cost of £15, which will be added to the students MCAS account.

Monitoring to ensure the approach is effective

To ensure that the approach is effective and robust, spot checks will be carried out on a regular basis, in that students will be asked to open their pouch and demonstrate that their phone works and connects to a mobile network.

Contact with families during the school day

If families need to share a message with a student during the school day, then they should contact the student's House Office directly, who will arrange for the message to be shared with the student.

Similarly, if a student needs to contact their parents/carers during the school day, they should speak to their Student Support Assistant (SSA) in their House Office. The SSA will, in most cases, contact the parents/carers on the student's behalf, but may, in exceptional circumstances and at their own professional discretion, allow the student to contact their parent/carers using the House Office phone.