

MODEL SCHOOLS MOBILE PHONE POLICY

Human Resources and Organisational Development



Plymouth Nursery Schools Federation.



CHANGES

1st December 2009: Policy Implemented

June 2010: Styling revised in line with corporate guidelines

October 2017: Amended by Plymouth Nursery School Federation to incorporate the use of SMART Technology.

December 2019: Amended by Plymouth Nursery School Federation to include use of mobile phone by visiting professionals and contractors.

May 2021: Amended by Plymouth Nursery School Federation to include allocation of work mobiles to staff.

Contacts

If you have any questions regarding this policy please contact the Schools HR Adviser.

For the purpose of this policy the term ‘mobile phone’ is used to refer to the use of mobile phones and other types of personal digital ‘SMART’ technology, to include but not exclusive to: Mobile Phones, Tablet Computers (including IPADs) and SMART watches.

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This model policy has been written with maintained status in mind. If this model is to be adopted by schools with Trust, Foundation, Voluntary Aided Status reference to the “Local Authority” need to be replaced with “the Governing Body” Control.

1 INTRODUCTION

Mobile phone technology has advanced significantly over the last few years - and it continues to evolve. Wireless connections in particular have extended the capabilities of mobile phones, enabling access to a wide range of new content and services globally. Many phones now offer Internet and email access, alongside the most often standard functions of messaging, camera, video and sound recording.

Mobile phones, alongside other forms of technology are changing the way and speed in which we communicate. They can provide security and reassurance; however there are also associated risks. Children and young people 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 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, 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 mobiles 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.

Designated 'mobile free' areas are situated within the setting, and signs to this effect are displayed throughout.

'Mobile free' areas are those which are considered to be the most vulnerable and sensitive, and include:

- sleep areas
- changing areas
- toilets
- bathrooms.
- teaching spaces
- any area where children are present

A zero-tolerance policy is in place with regards to the **use** of personal or work-related mobiles by any individual in these areas.

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.
- are vigilant and alert to potential warning signs.
- 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

6.1 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 (**other than the areas set out in Section Four above**); 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 and calls and texts must not be taken or made during work time.

Practitioners are not permitted, in any circumstance to use their phones for taking, recording or sharing images and 'mobile free' areas must be observed at all times.

Practitioners are not permitted to use their own personal phones for contacting children, young people and their families within or outside of the setting.

Parents, visitors and contractors

The setting's mobile phone procedure (see appendix a) is made clear to visitors as part of the site induction. All parents, visitors, and contractors are respectfully requested not to use their mobile phones in any of the designated mobile free areas. 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.

Where there is clear need for a visiting professional or contractor to use their mobile phone as part of their role (e.g. to take a picture of a part for repair), this needs to be agreed with a member of the SLT. In these instances phone use will be monitored by a member of staff who will check to ensure that any images taken do not contain children.

Under no circumstances is **any** individual permitted to take images or make recordings of children on a mobile phone. If a visitor is observed to take an image or video, they will be respectfully requested to delete this from their phone (including the 'recently deleted' folder of the device). If they refuse this request, or continue to take images then a member of the SLT will be informed and the person will be asked to leave the setting with advice sought from the Gateway or the Police.

Any individual bringing a personal device into the setting must ensure that it contains no inappropriate or illegal content.

6.2 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.
- A means of contact for all parents either out of office hours or in the event of land line phone failure.

Effective security measures are in place to safeguard against any potential misuse. Only authorised individuals have access to the work mobile, which is password protected, and 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. All calls are logged.

The work mobile is clearly labelled as such, and additional features such as cameras are disabled or not available/used.

Where a mobile phone is issued to a member of staff to enable them to fulfil a specific role (e.g. for outreach support), the receiving member of staff will be required to sign for the phone and confirm that they understand and agree to the acceptable use procedures outlined in this policy. The phone will remain the property of the setting and will be returned to the school if the member of staff leaves employment or is reassigned to a different role. A register of all mobile phones issued to staff will be kept up-to-date by the administrator.

6.3 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 recommend 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.

6.4 Safe storage

A designated safe and secure area for practitioners (and children, where applicable) to store their personal belongings during the working day is available. 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 and damages 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.

6.5 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 exceptional circumstances agreed with the Headteacher, are permitted to keep the volume of their phone switched on **(with the exception of all areas mentioned in Section Four above)**. This is to enhance their own well-being and piece 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.

Agreed by the Governing Body: 27th May 2021

Signed:

Chair of Governors

Review cycle: Annual. Next review May 2024

Plymouth Nursery School Federation mobile phone procedure for visitors/ contractors:

- CCTV is operation throughout the setting.
- Mobile phones and other 'SMART devices' are not to be used in areas of the setting where children are present.
- Where visitors/ contractors require the use of their phone as part of their work, they are responsible for informing a member of staff so that a staff member can supervise any use.
- Under no circumstances are pictures or videos to be taken of children in the settings.
- If visitors need to take a call then they are to leave the area where the children are present before using their mobile.
- Failure to comply with this procedure may result in the visitor/ contractor being asked to leave the setting.