

Mobile & Smart Technology Policy



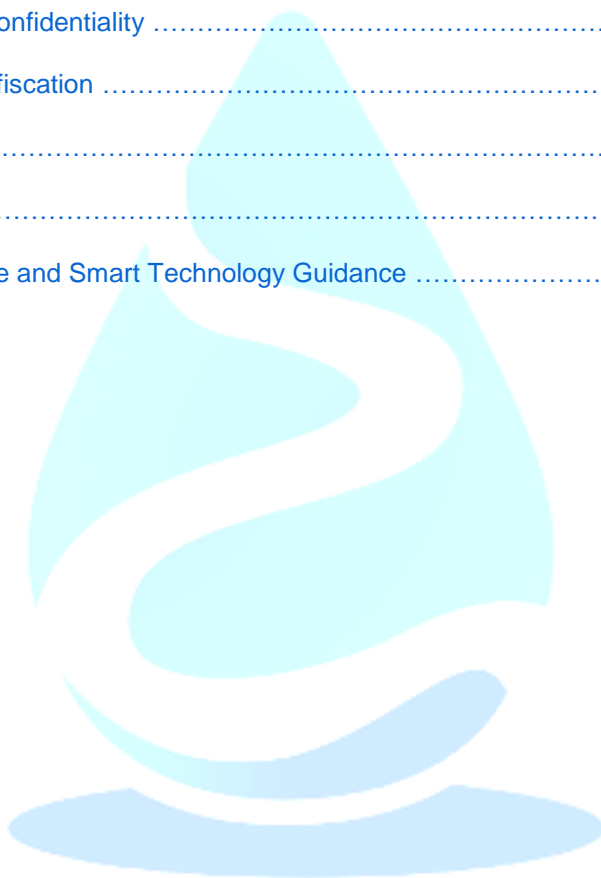
RIVERSIDE BRIDGE SCHOOL
INSPIRE, EMPOWER, ACHIEVE



Partnership Learning

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1. Introduction

Riverside Bridge School is a specialist provision for pupils with a wide range of complex learning, communication and sensory needs. Within our setting, safeguarding and the protection of pupil dignity is paramount. We recognise that mobile phones, smart watches and other digital devices are an integral part of modern life and communication. However, the presence of such devices in a special school environment presents significant risks relating to privacy, child protection, data security, distraction from learning and potential misuse.

This policy establishes clear expectations for all staff, pupils, parents, carers, visitors, contractors and external professionals regarding the use of mobile and smart technology on school premises or when representing the school off-site. It aims to ensure responsible digital conduct, protect pupils from harm or exposure to inappropriate content, and uphold the trust families place in us to provide a safe and professionally managed environment.

The policy supports and aligns with statutory guidance including Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE 2025), Behaviour in Schools (DfE 2024), Searching, Screening and Confiscation (2022), and the Data Protection Act 2018 (GDPR). It also complements the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Behaviour Policy, Online Safety Policy and Staff Code of Conduct.

Our aims are to:

- safeguard pupils' dignity, safety and well-being;
- prevent inappropriate recording or sharing of sensitive information;
- ensure that personal technology does not disrupt learning or therapeutic provision;
- promote a culture of professionalism, boundaries and trust;
- clarify procedures for confiscation, breach management and response.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all individuals *on Riverside Bridge School* premises, including:

- staff - teachers, support staff, therapists, agency workers, supply staff;
- pupils - including those on school transport, residential visits or college placements;
- parents and carers;
- visitors and contractors - local authority officers, NHS professionals, trainees, tradespeople;
- Governing Body Members and trustees.

It covers all personal or school-issued devices capable of communication, recording or data transfer, including but not limited to:

- mobile phones and smartphones;
- smart watches and wearable devices;
- tablets, laptops, e-readers and personal multimedia devices;
- trackers or devices with audio, camera or messaging capability.

This policy applies:

- on all school premises, including classrooms, corridors, playgrounds, changing areas and dining facilities;
- off-site, during educational visits, respite visits, community access, work-related learning and transport;
- during all school-led activities, including staff training, parent events, clubs and residential trips.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

Headteacher

The Headteacher holds overall responsibility for this policy, including its implementation, enforcement and annual review. The Headteacher may authorise temporary exceptions to this policy in exceptional individual cases (e.g., medical device uses or professional assessment requirements).

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

The DSL (and Deputies) are responsible for:

- providing staff training on safe mobile and digital practice;
- investigating breaches or concerns regarding device misuse;
- liaising with external agencies where safeguarding issues arise.

Governing Body

The governing body monitors the effectiveness of this policy and ensures it aligns with safeguarding, data protection and professional conduct expectations across the school.

All staff and adults in school

Every adult in school holds a duty of care. All staff and visitors are expected to:

- model appropriate use of technology;
- challenge unsafe or prohibited use;
- immediately report concerns involving mobile devices to the DSL.

4. Staff use of mobile and smart technology

Riverside Bridge School expects all staff to model the highest standards of professional conduct, including in their use of personal mobile phones or smart devices. Staff must ensure that their use of technology never compromises pupils' safety, professional boundaries, confidentiality, or the learning environment.

Personal mobile phones and smart devices must be kept switched off or on silent and stored out of sight during all contact time with pupils. Use of such devices is strictly limited to designated staff areas (e.g. staffroom and outside school gates) and must not occur in classrooms, corridors, playgrounds, or communal areas where pupils are present.

Staff must **not** use personal devices to:

- communicate with pupils or parents/carers (including via calls, texts or messaging apps such as WhatsApp or social media);
- take photographs, videos or audio recordings of pupils, staff, classrooms or learning materials;
- access or store school information, safeguarding data or personal records.

Any communication with families must go through official school systems, such as the school office, work email or school-provided devices. Staff must never give out personal contact details to parents or pupils under any circumstances.

In limited emergency situations (such as a personal family emergency or evacuation), staff may request temporary permission from a member of the Senior Leadership Team to use a personal device. Any such exception will be time-limited and must not involve pupils. This still must not take place in areas where pupils are present.

All staff must immediately report any accidental capture or recording of any pupil on a personal device to the DSL, and such material must be deleted under supervision. Failure to comply with this policy will be treated as a breach of the Staff Code of Conduct and may result in formal disciplinary action.

5. Use of personal devices during off-site activities

When supervising pupils off-site - including during educational visits, residentials, transport, work-related learning or community-based activities - staff remain bound by the principles of this policy. Personal mobile phones must not be used in the presence of pupils, or for taking photographs, navigation or communication unless a specific exception has been authorised in advance by the Headteacher or a member of SLT.

Where communication or emergency access is required on trips, a school-issued mobile device must be used. Staff must not use personal devices to contact parents/carers or external parties regarding pupil matters. In the event of an emergency, staff may use a personal device only if a school device is unavailable and pupils' safety is at immediate risk, and such use must be reported to SLT and the DSL without delay.

Staff must not, under any circumstances, post or share any trip-related content, pupil images, or location details on personal social media or messaging platforms. This applies both during and after the visit. Any breach, however minimal, will be addressed under the Staff Code of Conduct and may constitute a safeguarding concern.

6. Use of mobile and smart technology by pupils

Riverside Bridge School recognises that some pupils may require access to a mobile phone for purposes such as independent travel, safety when commuting, or communication with parents/carers outside of school hours. However, in order to maintain a safe, distraction-free and safeguarding-focused environment, pupils are not permitted to access or use mobile phones or smart technology anywhere on school premises.

Pupils who bring a mobile phone to school must hand it in immediately upon arrival to their class team or to the school office. Devices will be securely stored for the duration of the school day and will be returned only at home time. Under no circumstances may a pupil keep a device on their person, in their bag, coat, or classroom area. Mobile phones must never be seen, heard, or used during the school day.

Any pupil found to have retained a mobile phone or smart device, or who attempts to use or conceal one, will have the device confiscated. Parents/carers will be contacted, and the phone will only be returned to an adult. Repeated breaches will be treated as a behaviour and safeguarding issue and managed in line with the school's Behaviour and Relationships Policy.

Mobile and smart devices must not be used for photography, recording, messaging, or accessing the internet in school. This includes smart watches, wearable fitness trackers with messaging capability, and any device that could capture data, images or audio. These rules exist to protect pupils with complex needs, prevent the sharing of vulnerable content, and ensure privacy and dignity across all pathways.

In exceptional circumstances, parents/carers may request permission in writing to the Headteacher. Any agreed exception will be documented in an individual risk plan and strictly monitored by staff.

7. Use of mobile and smart technology by parents, carers, visitors and external professionals

Riverside Bridge School welcomes parents, carers, professionals and visitors into a collaborative community, and expects all adults on site to uphold the same safeguarding standards as staff. In line with our Parent and Visitor Code of Conduct, the use of mobile phones, smart watches and personal recording devices is strictly controlled to protect the privacy, dignity and safety of pupils and staff.

All visitors, including contractors, therapists, governors and professionals, must keep mobile phones and wearable devices on silent and out of sight whilst on school premises. The use of such devices is prohibited in all areas where pupils are present, including classrooms, corridors, dining areas, playgrounds and reception spaces.

Parents and visitors must not:

- take photographs, videos or recordings of any pupils, staff or school property;
- make or receive calls while supervising or interacting with pupils;
- use messaging apps or social media anywhere within the school building or grounds.

If a visitor urgently needs to use a mobile phone, they must move to a designated area, such as staffroom, reception or outside the school gates, where no pupils are present. Staff may politely challenge any adult whose mobile use compromises safeguarding. Any refusal to cooperate or inappropriate use will result in the visitor being asked to leave and may lead to further action, including restriction of access to the school site.

External professionals (such as NHS therapists, educational psychologists or local authority officers) who require digital devices for assessment or documentation must seek prior approval from the Headteacher or DSL. Any images, recordings or notes taken must comply with data protection law, consent procedures and professional safeguarding standards. All such activity must be logged, authorised and supervised where appropriate.

Contractors and tradespersons will be advised on arrival that the use of mobile phones is restricted and that taking photographs of the school site, staff or pupils is prohibited. Failure to follow these expectations will be considered a breach of safeguarding protocol and will be escalated accordingly.

Use of tracking devices in school

Air Tags or small Bluetooth-enabled tracking devices, although created to help people find lost belongings, present serious dangers when brought into schools. Moreover, the presence of such devices disrupts the trust and safe environment schools strive to maintain, where pupils and staff should feel secure from external surveillance. Additionally, unauthorised use of tracking devices may interfere with school policies and emergency protocols, complicating efforts to protect everyone on campus, those being our vulnerable children, looked-after children or others who may need other protective and personalised safeguarding.

In addition to privacy concerns, tracking devices pose health and safety risks due to their small parts and internal battery. The device contains a button cell battery that can be extremely dangerous if swallowed, especially by younger children. Ingesting these batteries can cause severe internal burns, choking hazards, or even life-threatening injuries. Furthermore, the small components of a tracking device can easily break loose, creating choking risks for children and others on school premises. Because our school is an environment where children of varying ages are present, the presence of tracking devices introduces a potential hazard that cannot be overlooked.

Moreover, tracking devices are designed to emit a sound to help locate them, but this noise can be disruptive or alarming in a quiet school environment, potentially causing distractions or anxiety among students and staff and those who wear hearing aids or cochlears.

Another concern is that tracking devices can appear on nearby devices within a certain range, alerting people that a tracker is nearby. While this feature is intended as a security measure, it can lead to confusion or concern among students and staff, particularly if they are unaware of the source or purpose of the device.

We ask that children do not wear or bring in tracking devices to school. If there are concerns around a child's safety at school or on the way into school, then a meeting between the family and the pupil's pathway lead can take place to address this and a plan.

8. Data protection, privacy and confidentiality

Riverside Bridge School has a legal and ethical duty to protect all personal data, imagery and confidential information relating to pupils, families, and staff. The misuse of mobile phones and smart technology poses significant risks to privacy, data protection and safeguarding, particularly within a special school environment that supports vulnerable pupils with complex needs.

All staff, visitors and professionals must understand that personal mobile phones and smart devices must never be used to capture, store or transfer personal information about pupils, staff or the school. This includes photographs, videos, audio clips, messages, assessment notes or case discussions. No images or data may be uploaded to social media, messaging apps, personal cloud systems or AI platforms (such as WhatsApp, iCloud, ChatGPT or similar services) under any circumstances.

School-owned devices and platforms must always be used for authorised photography, record keeping or digital communication, in line with the school's Data Protection Policy, Image Use Policy and Acceptable Use Standards. Any images or recordings taken for educational or safeguarding purposes must be securely stored, used responsibly, and deleted when no longer required.

In accordance with UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018:

- personal data must be processed lawfully, securely and only for legitimate educational or safeguarding purposes;
- pupils and families have the right to privacy, dignity and protection from unauthorised surveillance or sharing;
- staff must report accidental or unauthorised data capture immediately to the Data Protection Lead or DSL.

Any breach of data security involving personal technology will be treated as a serious safeguarding matter and managed through the school's data breach procedures, including the potential involvement of external authorities such as the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) or the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

9. Searching, screening and confiscation

To protect all pupils and uphold safeguarding standards, Riverside Bridge School retains the right to search for, confiscate and remove mobile or smart devices that are used in breach of this policy. This is carried out in accordance with DfE Searching, Screening and Confiscation Guidance (2022) and the school's Behaviour and Child Protection procedures.

Devices may be searched if there is reasonable cause to suspect:

- inappropriate images, messages or recordings;

- bullying, harassment or intimidation;
- online harm, exploitation or criminal material;
- breaches of confidentiality or disclosure of sensitive content.

Confiscated devices will be stored securely in the school office and returned only to a parent/carer or authorised adult. Staff are not permitted to examine or delete content on a pupil's device themselves. If illegal or harmful material is suspected, the device must be passed immediately to the DSL and may be handed to the police.

Staff must never attempt to view indecent images of children or confront pupils directly about the content. All concerns must follow safeguarding reporting procedures. Any refusal to hand over a device will be treated as serious defiance and managed in line with the Behaviour Policy.

10. Loss, theft and liability

Riverside Bridge School accepts that some members of the school community may need to carry personal mobile devices as part of daily life, particularly staff and visitors. However, the school cannot accept responsibility for any personal devices that are brought onto the premises. This includes loss, theft, damage or malfunction of mobile phones, smart watches, tablets or any other personal technology, whether stored or in use.

All devices brought onto school grounds are done so at the owner's own risk. Staff and visitors must ensure devices are password-protected, locked when not in use and never left unattended in classrooms, corridors or shared areas. Pupils who hand in mobiles for safe storage remain personally responsible for labelling and securing the device prior to handover. The school will store confiscated or handed-in devices securely but cannot assume liability for personal property.

Should a device be lost or damaged while in the school's possession due to confiscation or safeguarding intervention, the school will take reasonable steps to secure it but will not fund repairs or replacements. Any dispute regarding a lost or damaged device will be managed through the school's Complaints Procedure, not as a safeguarding or disciplinary matter unless policy breaches are involved.

11. Monitoring

Riverside Bridge School is committed to consistent enforcement of this policy to promote a safe, respectful and professional learning environment. The Senior Leadership Team and DSL will monitor compliance through observation, incident tracking, behaviour records and safeguarding referrals.

All staff will receive annual training on the safe and appropriate use of mobile and smart technologies, linked to wider safeguarding, online safety, data protection and professional conduct expectations. New staff and agency personnel will be briefed at induction.

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if:

- new statutory guidance is issued;
- there are significant technological changes;
- incidents occur that identify gaps in practice.

The Governing Body, through the Safeguarding Link Governor, will oversee the effectiveness of this policy and ensure it remains aligned with the school's safeguarding agenda, including the Four School Priorities and Five Drivers.

Feedback from staff, parents/carers, pupils and visitors will be considered in each review cycle, reinforcing our commitment to continual improvement and collaborative safeguarding.

Appendix A: Visitor Mobile Phone and Smart Technology Guidance

Use of Mobile and Smart Technology in Our School

To protect the privacy and safety of our pupils, all visitors must follow this guidance:

- phones must be **kept on silent** while on school grounds
- **no phone use is permitted** in areas where pupils are present
- **no photographs or recordings** of pupils, staff or school premises
- if urgent use is required, please go to **the staffroom or exit the building**
- the school accepts **no liability** for personal devices brought onto school site

A full copy of the Mobile & Smart Technology Policy is available on request.

