

Principles

This policy is grounded in the recognition of the growing risks associated with primary-aged children using smartphones, smartwatches or any other internet enabled digital device. Whilst we acknowledge that many children have unsupervised access to smartphones outside school, and whilst we respect parents' decisions about what is best for their child, we need to play a proactive role in educating pupils and families about both the potential positives and negatives of smartphone use at a young age. While digital technology can offer some positive social and learning opportunities, smartphones can also expose young children to inappropriate content, online bullying, unhealthy screen time habits, and potential safeguarding concerns. The policy reflects our responsibility to protect pupils from these risks.

The Government, plus some parents and childhood professionals are becoming increasingly concerned over the use of social media and unrestricted internet use by children and this policy reflects the current guidance for schools from the Secretary of State for Education. It is expected that this policy would need to be amended if further guidance comes out in the future.

The guiding principle of this policy is that Hitherfield Primary is a smartphone-free school for all pupils. This means that children cannot bring smartphones, or any other internet enabled device, onto the school site at any time. The policy on non-smartphone mobile phones for year 4, 5 & 6 pupils, smartwatches and trackers is also set out below. The school respectfully requests adults and older children to refrain from using their smartphones on school premises.

Aims

This policy covers three groups: staff in the school, visitors to the school and children. It outlines what is considered 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable' use of mobile phones and digital devices by the entire school community, both at Hitherfield Primary School and during activities outside school. This applies to all individuals who have access to personal and/or work-related digital devices within the broadest context of the setting; including children and young people, parents and carers, practitioners, managers, volunteers, governors, visitors, contractors and community users. This list is not exhaustive.

It is to be recognised that it is the enhanced functions of many digital devices that will give the most cause for concern, and which should be considered the most susceptible to potential misuse. Examples of severe misuse include the taking and distribution of indecent images, exploitation and bullying.

It must be understood that should digital devices be misused, there will be a negative impact on an individual's safety, dignity, privacy and right to confidentiality. Such concerns are not to be considered exclusive to children, so the needs and vulnerabilities of all must be respected and protected.

Mobile phones and digital devices pose a particular safety risk for primary-aged children for a number of reasons. They are highly desirable items that can make pupils a target for theft or street robbery. Additionally, the use of phones and digital devices while walking can cause dangerous distractions, leading to reduced awareness of traffic and surroundings, which increases the risk of accidents on the journey to and from school.

Younger people are less able to differentiate between misinformation and fact, both in the real world and online. They are also more vulnerable to social influence and grooming both of which can occur via social media.

Mobile phones and digital devices can also cause an unnecessary distraction during the working day and are often considered intrusive when used in the company of others.

We would respectfully request parents and other adults not to use their phones when they are on the school site.

Mobile phones and digital devices brought onto the Hitherfield Primary School premises are entirely at the families', staff member's or visitor's own risk. The school accepts no responsibility for the loss, theft or damage of any phone or handheld device brought into our premises.

Staff and Visitors' Use of Personal Digital Devices

- Staff members and visitors may use their phones during school break times in the purple zone (Staffrooms, Main School Office, outside the main school office entrance) but are otherwise required to keep their phones on silent or switched off.
- The recording, taking and sharing of images, video and audio on any personal mobile phone or digital device is to be avoided, except where it has been explicitly agreed otherwise by the Executive Headteacher or Head of School. Such authorised use is to be monitored and recorded. All mobile phone use is open to scrutiny and the Executive Headteacher/Head of School can withdraw or restrict authorisation for use at any time if it is deemed necessary.
- Where parents/carers and children need to contact each other during the school day, they should do so through the school office telephone.
- Personal mobile phones or digital devices will not be used during lessons or formal school time unless approved and consent granted by the Executive Headteacher or Head of School for emergency reasons. Exceptions for medical reasons will be assessed on a case by case basis with documentation, and must be approved by the Executive Headteacher/Head of School in consultation with relevant medical professions.

Children's use of personal digital devices

- **The use of Smartphones and other digital devices are strictly prohibited on school grounds. This includes, but is not limited to, devices such as the Apple iPhone, Samsung Galaxy, Google Pixel, Motorola Razr, and OnePlus models. We ask for parents' full cooperation in supporting and enforcing this policy. This means that smartphones cannot be brought to school by a child in any circumstances.**
 - Breaches of the above policy will result in the smartphone being confiscated and stored securely in the school office. Devices will only be returned directly to a parent/carer and should not be brought into school again.
- Hitherfield Primary School recognises that, in exceptional circumstances, a parent/carer may wish their child, **in Years 4, 5 or 6 only**, to carry a mobile phone when travelling to and from school. In such cases:
 - Basic, non-smartphones are permitted. A non-exhaustive list includes: Karri Messenger, Light Phone II, The Phone+, Pinwheel Phone, Balance Phone HMD Fusion or Fuse and Other Phone.

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- These devices will ideally have limited functionality, be of low monetary value, and lack internet, camera, and app access.
- Devices must be clearly labelled with the child's name and handed in to the school office upon arrival each day and collected from the office just before a child leaves the school site.
- Parents/carers must seek prior permission from the Executive Headteacher or Head of School to walk home from school alone, so that a non- smart mobile phone can be brought to school. A form is available in the main school office or on the website.
- Parents are kindly asked not to contact their child directly via a mobile phone during school hours, but instead to contact the school office for messages to be passed on.
- Only children in **Years 4, 5 and 6, who walk to or from school alone**, are permitted to bring internet-enabled tracker devices (e.g. Apple AirTags, Amazon Smart Tags) to school, if parents wish to monitor their child's journey to and from school in real time. These devices should be securely placed inside the child's school bag.
- Whilst we would not expect to enact this very often, Hitherfield Primary School reserves the right to search the content of any pupil mobiles or digital devices at any time as part of a specific investigation or routine monitoring.

This policy is a working document and will be reviewed every two years or earlier if national guidance changes. Senior Leaders will report to the school governors and staff on standards and achievements and make recommendations for future priorities.