

East Prescott Road Nursery School



Mobile Phone Policy

Approved: February 2024
Review: February 2025

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.

Aims:

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 strategies.

Scope:

This policy applies to **all individuals** who have access to personal (or work-related mobile phones on site). This includes staff, volunteers, children, young people, parents/ carers, visitors and community users. This list is not exhaustive.

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 mobile 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 at East Prescot Road Nursery School 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 are:

- **All children's toilet areas**

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

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. This policy is linked to the school's Acceptable Use Policy and Staff and Code of Conduct.

Procedures:

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:

Staff, Governors Volunteers and Students: are permitted to have their mobile phones about their person. The use of a mobile phone is restricted to **lunch and/or tea breaks**. Other than in agreed exceptional circumstances (and with prior permission granted by the Headteacher), **phones must be switched off and calls and texts must not be taken or made** during session times.

Staff, Governors Volunteers and Students: are **not permitted** to use their own personal phones for contacting children, young people and their families within or outside of the setting unless authorised by the Headteacher.

Parents/carers, visitors and contractors: are respectfully requested **not to use** their mobile phones in school. 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.

During regular school days, **no individual is permitted** to take images or make recordings on a mobile phone.

However, on certain special occasions such as Graduation, Christmas and other whole school events, parents and carers will be allowed to take photographs or videos of the event. Families will be advised in advance when these events are taking place, provided with a letter outlining the school guidelines and asked to give permission for their child to be filmed.

See Appendix 1: *Guidance for Parents taking Photographs and filming at School Productions*
Example Text for letters to parents

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

School mobile phone:

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

Effective security measures are in place to safeguard against any potential misuse. Only authorised individuals have access to the work mobile, 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 used.

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.

Safe storage: A designated safe and secure area for practitioners to store their personal belongings is available in each class room. Practitioners are required to store their mobile phones in this area. As well as safeguarding children and avoiding any unnecessary disruptions during the day, this procedure also aims to protect staff against any unfounded allegations.

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 agreed exceptional circumstances are permitted to keep the volume of their phone switched on. This must be approved by the Headteacher in all circumstances.

This is to enhance staff well-being and peace 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.

Appendix 1:

Guidance for Parents Taking Photographs and Filming at School Productions Example Text for letters to parents

We are staging a production/special event of on xxxxxx. We are sure some parents/carers would like to take photographs/videos of the production. As you know we have a policy in place with regards to the taking, making and use of images and you will have previously signed a consent form stating whether or not your child could be photographed.

If you wish to take photos at the production there is a strong possibility that other children will also be included within the picture.

At East Prescot Road Nursery School we are happy for parents and carers to take photos and video of events for personal use but we request that these images are not distributed or put online. This is to protect all members of the community.

We all enjoy and treasure images of our family and friends; family events, holidays and events are moments we all like to capture in photos or on video. We now have the exciting dimension of adding our images and videos to our online social networks and our website. This means that we can easily share our photos and video with family and friends.

Whilst this can be very useful to all of us we must ensure we protect and safeguard all children and staff, including those who do not want to have their images stored online.

Please be aware that parents are not permitted to take photographs or to make a video recording for anything other than their own personal use.

- Once posted and shared online any image or video can be copied and will stay online forever.
- Some children are at risk and **MUST NOT** have their image put online. Not all members of the community will know who they are.
- Some people do not want their images online for personal or religious reasons.
- Some children and staff may have a complex family background which means that sharing their image online can have unforeseen consequences.
- In order to keep all members of the community safe we must all **'Think Before We Post'** Online.