



# St Thomas More Catholic Primary School, Saffron Walden

## SMART PHONE USE AND EXPECTATIONS POLICY

No. STM-025

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Accountable Director ( <i>Relevant ED</i> )	<i>Main Committee</i>

## Smartphone Use and Expectations Policy

This policy sets clear, consistent expectations for pupils, parents/carers, and staff on the possession and use of smartphones and other portable electronic communication devices in school. It harmonises practice across the Saffron Walden primary schools and establishes continuity into secondary transition.

### 1. Purpose

- Safeguard pupils' wellbeing, learning and social development.
- Provide practical procedures for storage, confiscation, sanctions and communication.
- Align expectations across schools and support continuity into secondary.

### 2. Scope

Devices covered: Smartphones and any device capable of internet access, messaging, photography/video or social media (e.g., data-enabled smartwatches, tablets, music players with connectivity). Settings: On school premises, at the school gate, on school transport and during school-led activities (trips, clubs, residential).

### 3. Rationale

The group has set a smartphone-free approach due to risks to mental health, sleep, attention, exposure to harmful content, cyberbullying, and reduced play/social interaction among children. Families are encouraged to delay social media access until legal ages and to consider non-internet 'retro' phones if contact is essential for travel.

### 4. Policy timeline (phased approach)

1. Current policy (until August 2027): Only Year 5 and Year 6 pupils who travel independently may bring a phone. Devices must remain off and stored all day. Families are strongly encouraged to choose a non-smart (call/text) phone if a device is needed.
2. From September 2027 (full implementation): Smartphones are not permitted for any primary pupil on school premises or at school activities. If a phone is necessary for travel, it must be non-smart (call/text only).

### 5. Roles and responsibilities

#### Parents/carers

- Decide whether a device is necessary for travel; where necessary, provide a basic call/text phone and ensure your child understands this policy.
- Use the school office as the point of contact during the school day.
- Refrain from enabling social media for children below minimum legal age; monitor use of other data-enabled devices at home.

#### Pupils

- Comply with storage and 'off' requirements; never use a device on site without explicit staff permission.

## Staff

- Monitor compliance, apply confiscation and sanctions fairly, and report concerns (including safeguarding and online harms) following school procedures.

## Headteachers/Governing bodies

- Ensure consistent implementation, review the policy annually, and update procedures in line with safeguarding guidance.

## 6. What is allowed (transitional period to Aug 2027 only)

- Y5–Y6 independent travellers may bring a basic phone; if a smartphone is already owned, it must remain off and stored throughout the day and may not be used for social media or internet access.
- Reasonable adjustments: where a device is required as part of a disability or medical need, the school will agree a personalised plan with parents (including storage and permissions).

## 7. Storage and daytime procedures (where a phone is permitted pre-Sept 2027)

- Devices must be switched off before entering the site and remain off until leaving the site.
- On arrival, pupils place devices in their class lockable phone box or a named, sealed envelope stored securely in the office.
- Devices may only be collected at the end of the school day. No exceptions without prior staff permission.

## 8. Prohibited uses (at all times)

- Calls, messages, browsing, gaming, listening to music, photography/video, or any social media use on site.
- Recording or sharing images/audio of pupils or staff; uploading/sharing content that humiliates, bullies or harasses others (incidents may be criminal and referred to police).
- Bringing other personal connected devices (e.g., data-enabled smartwatches, tablets).

## 9. Cyberbullying, online safety and safeguarding

Any use of a device to bully, harass, menace or share harmful content will be treated as a serious behaviour breach and a safeguarding concern; responses may include parental meetings, removal of device privileges, or referral to external agencies including police. Families are encouraged to use home internet controls and delay social media access until legal age.

## 10. Confiscation and sanctions

- If a device is seen or used on site without permission, staff will confiscate it immediately. It will be stored securely and returned only to a parent/carer at the end of the day. No negotiation with pupils or parents about on-the-spot returns.

- Repeat or serious breaches (including cyberbullying or recording others) may result in loss of the privilege to bring any device, behaviour sanctions per the school's policy, and/or police referral where appropriate.

#### 11. Theft, damage and personal responsibility

Parents/carers accept that devices are brought to school at the family's risk; the school does not accept liability for loss, theft or damage except where legal negligence is proven. Pupils should mark devices with identification and keep them concealed while travelling.

#### 12. Communications with parents/carers

The school office remains the first point of contact for urgent messages during the school day. The group will continue to share information on non-smart alternatives (e.g., basic call/text handsets) and local support through Smartphone Free Childhood community sessions.

#### 14. Monitoring and review

All staff will monitor compliance and report incidents. Headteachers and governing bodies will review this policy annually to ensure it remains effective and workable.

## St Thomas More Catholic Primary School

### Parent/Carer Letter: Smartphone Use and Expectations

Dear Parents/Carers,

As part of our Saffron Walden schools' commitment to pupil wellbeing, we will be moving to a smartphone-free approach for primary pupils. This is a phased change culminating in a full ban on smartphones in primary school from September 2027. We know many children already own devices, so we are providing plenty of notice and clear, practical guidance.

At St Thomas More Catholic Primary School, our priority is children's safety, learning and friendships. We recognise that some families need a way to contact children who travel independently; if so, please choose a basic call/text phone and keep it off and stored during the day.

Why this change?

- Evidence continues to link early smartphone use with poorer mental health, disrupted sleep and attention, exposure to harmful content and cyberbullying, and reduced time for play and in-person social interaction.
- We encourage families to delay social media until legal ages and to monitor use of other data-enabled devices at home.

What's the timeline?

- Now to August 2027: Only Year 5–6 pupils who travel independently may bring a phone; it must be off and stored during the day. We strongly recommend a basic call/text handset instead of a smartphone.
- From September 2027: No smartphones are permitted for any primary pupil on site or at school activities. If a phone is essential for travel, it must be a non-smart (call/text only) device.

How will school manage phones during the day?

- On arrival, phones are switched off and placed in a class phone box or a named, sealed envelope in the office, and collected at the end of the day.

Additional support

- For non-smart alternatives, many retailers offer affordable models (e.g., simple 'brick' phones). Local 'Smartphone Free Childhood' sessions will share tips and answer questions.

Thank you for partnering with us to safeguard children and help them thrive at school. If you have questions or need to discuss reasonable adjustments for medical or accessibility

reasons, please contact the school office.

Yours sincerely,

A. Stockdale  
Headteacher, St Thomas More Catholic Primary School