



St. Thomas More
CATHOLIC VOLUNTARY ACADEMY

MOBILE PHONES AND SIMILAR TECHNOLOGY POLICY

Approved by:	Local Governing Body	Date: September 2026
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Last reviewed on: September 2026	Policy owner: Headteacher
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Next review due by: September 2027	Earlier if guidance changes
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The St Thomas More Mission:

We the St Thomas More family, 'aspire not to have more but be more'.

We aspire not to have the world but be more for the world.

#BeMore

We are A uthentic	we seek to find our true vocation and who we really are
We are S acred	we are loved and made in the image of God
We are P assionate	we strive to grow and be our best selves
We are I nspirational	what we do here can help us change the world
We are R esilient	for our greatest learning comes when we make mistakes
We are E mpathetic	we are called to care for all in our community and the world

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1. Purpose, scope and legal framework

St Thomas More Catholic Voluntary Academy is committed to a calm, safe and purposeful environment in which pupils can learn, build positive relationships and be fully present to one another. This policy supports our mission to ‘aspire not to have more but be more’ and our responsibility to safeguard every member of the school family.

This policy applies to all pupils while they are on the school premises during the school day. It also applies, where stated by the school, on school transport, visits, fixtures, trips, residential and other school activities. ‘Device’ in this policy includes a mobile phone and any personal communication or smart technology with similar functionality, including smartwatches, connected earbuds, tablets and any device capable of calls, messages, notifications, internet access, audio recording, photography or video recording.

1.1 What the law and statutory guidance require

The Department for Education’s Mobile phones in schools guidance became statutory on 29 June 2026 and schools should follow it from 1 September 2026. Schools must have a behaviour policy aligned with their legal duties. The statutory guidance says that schools should be mobile phone-free by default, should prohibit pupils’ use of mobile phones and similar smart technology throughout the school day, and should have arrangements through which parents and pupils can communicate via the school.

Schools must also comply with other legal duties. These include making reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils under the Equality Act 2010 and making arrangements to support pupils with

medical conditions under section 100 of the Children and Families Act 2014, having regard to the relevant statutory guidance. Searching, confiscation and disciplinary sanctions must be lawful, reasonable and proportionate, with relevant individual circumstances considered.

1.2 What St Thomas More has chosen

The statutory guidance allows headteachers to decide how a mobile phone-free environment will be achieved in their school. The detailed storage rule, the staged consequences and the collection arrangements below are St Thomas More's chosen policy. They are not presented as requirements imposed word-for-word by legislation.

2. The St Thomas More policy

Pupils must not have a mobile phone or similar personal communication technology on their person while on the school premises. A device must not be seen, heard, used or accessed at any point during the school day anywhere on the school's premises, including before registration, in lessons, between lessons, at breaktime, at lunchtime and after the final lesson while the pupil remains on the premises e.g. for an after school club.

The school recognises that parents/carers may wish a pupil to carry a phone for safety while travelling to and from school. Where a pupil brings a phone for this reason, the pupil must:

- switch it off completely before entering the school premises (silent, flight mode and 'do not disturb' are not sufficient);
- place it securely at the bottom of their school bag before entering the premises;
- leave it switched off and in that position for the whole school day; and
- not switch it on or access it until they have left the school premises.

Pupils must not use a personal device to contact a parent/carer during the school day. Parents/carers must not call, message or otherwise contact a pupil through a personal device during that time. If a pupil needs to contact home, a member of staff will facilitate this through the school office or pastoral team. A parent/carer who needs to contact their child must telephone the school office; the school will relay an appropriate message or facilitate communication.

2.1 Examples of a breach

A breach includes, but is not limited to:

- a device being seen, heard, switched on, used or accessed anywhere on the premises;
- carrying a device on the pupil's person, in clothing or somewhere other than securely at the bottom of the school bag;
- attempting to conceal the possession or use of a device;
- refusing or failing promptly to hand over a device when instructed by a member of staff;
- using or holding another pupil's device, or asking another pupil to use a device on their behalf;

- bringing or carrying a second or 'spare' phone/device in order to avoid the policy or a confiscation;
- making or receiving calls, messages or notifications through a smartwatch, earbuds or another connected device;
- photographing, filming or recording another person, or attempting to do so; and
- possessing or using a phone, camera or recording-capable device in a toilet, changing room or other private area.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 Headteacher and governors

- The Headteacher is responsible for implementing this policy, deciding any individual authorised arrangements and ensuring that it operates consistently with the Behaviour Policy, Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and the school's legal duties.
- The Local Governing Body will approve and monitor the policy and seek assurance that the statutory guidance has been considered.

3.2 Staff

- All staff will model and enforce the policy consistently and calmly.
- A staff member who identifies a breach will instruct the pupil to hand over the device and will follow the school's secure recording and storage procedure. Confiscated mobile phones or other technologies should be passed to the school office.
- Staff will consider whether an incident raises a safeguarding concern and refer it without delay to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or a deputy where appropriate.
- Staff will not normally use a personal phone for personal reasons in front of pupils. Legitimate work use, such as multi-factor authentication or an emergency procedure, must be discreet and consistent with the Staff Code of Conduct.

3.3 Pupils

Pupils are responsible for following the storage and non-use rules, handing over a device immediately when instructed, and reporting concerns about device use to a trusted adult.

3.4 Parents/carers

- Parents/carers should avoid sending a phone to school unless it is needed for the journey.
- Parents/carers must reinforce the policy at home and ensure their child understands the storage rule and consequences.
- During the school day, parents/carers must contact the school office rather than their child's personal device.

- Where collection is required, the parent/carer must collect the device personally (or authorise another responsible adult in advance) and sign the school acknowledgement record.

4. Medical needs and individual adjustments

The only routine exception to the school's prohibition is where a pupil has a significant medical need requiring access to a mobile phone or associated technology, for example continuous glucose monitoring for diabetes. An exception is not automatic. It may be authorised only by the Headteacher after the individual need and available evidence have been considered, with appropriate input from the pupil, parent/carer and relevant staff or healthcare professional.

The authorised arrangement must be recorded formally, normally within the pupil's individual healthcare plan or another agreed plan. It will specify the device, permitted purpose, times and locations of access, storage, supervision, communication arrangements and review date. Permission is limited to what is necessary for the identified need and does not permit general communication, entertainment, photography, recording or social-media use.

The school will consider each case in accordance with its legal duties, including the duty to make reasonable adjustments for a disabled pupil and to support pupils with medical conditions. If the law requires an adjustment beyond the school's usual arrangements, the Headteacher will record and authorise the necessary individual provision. Urgent temporary medical arrangements may be agreed while longer-term evidence is obtained.

5. Breaches, confiscation and sanctions

A phone or other device may be confiscated as a disciplinary penalty where this policy is breached. The member of staff will require the device to be handed over without delay. It will be recorded and stored securely in the school office or another designated secure location. The school will contact the parent/carer.

Stage	School consequence
First breach	The device is confiscated and will not be returned to the pupil. A parent/carer must collect it and sign a document acknowledging the first breach of the Mobile Phone Policy.
Second breach	The device is confiscated and the pupil receives a Headteacher Detention. A parent/carer must collect the device and sign to acknowledge the second breach of the policy.
Further breaches	The matter is dealt with using the school's Behaviour Policy in full, as persistent or repeated failure to follow the school's expectations and reasonable instructions.

A refusal to hand over a device, deliberate deception, use of a second device or another serious/aggravated breach may also be addressed immediately under the Behaviour Policy. This means that the school is not required to treat a serious incident as a simple first breach. Photographing or recording others, use in toilets/changing rooms, bullying, harassment, sexual-image sharing or suspected criminal conduct may lead to additional safeguarding action, sanctions and referral to the police or another agency.

Confiscation will be for no longer than the school considers proportionate. Ordinarily, the device will be available for parent/carer collection from the school office during published opening times or by prior arrangement. The school may retain a device for longer, or pass it to the police, where this is lawful and necessary for safeguarding or as potential evidence.

6. Searching devices and safeguarding

Mobile phones and similar devices are items for which a search may be conducted under the school rules. Only the Headteacher or a member of staff authorised by the Headteacher may carry out a non-consensual search, and any search will follow the current DfE Searching, screening and confiscation guidance and the school's Behaviour Policy. Staff may ask a pupil to hand over a device without conducting a search.

A search of a pupil or their possessions must be based on lawful grounds and carried out with regard to privacy, safeguarding, the pupil's age and needs, SEND and any reasonable adjustments.

Staff will not routinely examine the contents of a confiscated device. Data or files may be examined only where the legal test and current DfE guidance permit it and there is a good reason to do so. Such decisions will normally be made by the Headteacher, DSL or a specifically authorised senior member of staff. If material may be evidence of an offence, it must not be deleted and the device should be passed to the police as soon as reasonably practicable.

If an incident may involve nude or semi-nude images of a child, staff must not intentionally view, copy, print, share, store or save the image. The device should be secured without exploring its contents and the matter referred immediately to the DSL or a deputy, who will follow Keeping Children Safe in Education and relevant safeguarding guidance. Any concern that a pupil is suffering or at risk of harm will be managed under the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

7. Examinations

Mobile phones, smartwatches, earbuds and other communication, internet-enabled or data-storage devices are prohibited in examination rooms in accordance with current Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) regulations and the school's Examinations Policy. Pupils must follow the instructions issued for each examination, including arrangements for leaving devices outside the room or handing them in before entry. Possession of an unauthorised device in an examination may be reported to the awarding body and can result in loss of marks or disqualification, even if the device is switched off.

8. Trips, residential visits and off-site activities

The normal school-day rule applies to visits and activities taking place during the school day unless the Headteacher has approved a specific written arrangement. For residential visits, travel outside normal school hours or particular off-site activities, the visit leader will decide—through the visit planning and risk-assessment process—whether devices are prohibited, collected, stored or permitted only at defined times for a defined purpose. The arrangements will be communicated to pupils and parents/carers before the visit.

Any permission on a trip does not permit photographing, filming or recording another person without authorisation, use in bedrooms, toilets or changing areas, online bullying, harmful content, or contact that undermines safeguarding arrangements. The visit leader may confiscate a device in line with this policy and the Behaviour Policy.

9. Staff, visitors and volunteers

Staff use of personal and school-issued devices is governed by the Staff Code of Conduct, Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, Data Protection Policy and Acceptable Use Policy. Staff must not use a personal device to photograph or record pupils or their work. School equipment must be used for authorised educational images and recordings. Staff must not use personal contact details to communicate with pupils or parents/carers unless a specific, authorised school procedure permits this.

Visitors, contractors, governors and volunteers must keep devices silent and secure, must not use them where pupils are present unless authorised for a legitimate purpose, and must not photograph, film or record pupils or staff. A person supervising a school visit must follow the visit leader's instructions and must not contact other families or create images of pupils using a personal device.

10. Loss, damage and security

A pupil who brings a device to school does so at the owner's risk. The school cannot accept responsibility for loss, theft or damage. Pupils should use a passcode, keep the device switched off and stored as required, and avoid bringing expensive devices to school.

A confiscated device will be recorded and stored with reasonable care in a secure location. It will be released only in accordance with this policy, normally to a parent/carer whose identity can be verified. Found devices should be handed to the school office.

11. Communication, monitoring and review

The school will publish this policy and communicate its expectations and consequences clearly to pupils, parents/carers, staff and visitors. Pupils will be reminded at the start of each academic year and at appropriate intervals. Teaching about online safety, respectful relationships and the risks

and benefits associated with mobile technology will continue through the curriculum and wider pastoral programme.

The Headteacher and Assistant Headteacher responsible for Behaviour and Standards will monitor implementation, including patterns of breaches, safeguarding incidents, consistency and the effect on pupils with SEND or medical needs. The policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner if legislation, statutory guidance, JCQ regulations or school circumstances change.

11.1 Related policies and authoritative guidance

- School policies: Behaviour; Child Protection and Safeguarding; Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions; SEND; Data Protection; Acceptable Use; Staff Code of Conduct; Educational Visits; Examinations.
- Department for Education, Mobile phones in schools (statutory guidance, updated 29 June 2026; to be followed from 1 September 2026).
- Department for Education, Searching, screening and confiscation in schools (July 2022, updated landing page July 2023).
- Department for Education, Behaviour in schools: advice for headteachers and school staff (February 2024).
- Department for Education, Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 (in force from 1 September 2026).
- Department for Education, Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions (statutory guidance).
- Equality Act 2010; Children and Families Act 2014; Education Act 1996; Education and Inspections Act 2006.
- Joint Council for Qualifications, current Instructions for Conducting Examinations and Suspected Malpractice policies and procedures.

Appendix 1: Pupil summary

St Thomas More is a mobile phone-free school. The rule is simple:

- Do not bring a phone or similar device unless you need it for safety on your journey.
- Before entering the school premises, switch it off completely and put it securely at the bottom of your school bag.
- It must stay switched off and in your bag until you have left the school premises.
- It must never be on your person, seen, heard, used or accessed during the school day.
- Do not communicate through a smartwatch, earbuds or another connected device.
- Do not use another pupil's device or bring a second device.
- Never photograph, film or record another person, and never have or use a recording device in toilets or changing rooms.
- If a member of staff asks for a device, hand it over immediately.
- To contact home, speak to the school office or pastoral team.

First breach: parent/carers collection and signed acknowledgement.

Second breach: parent/carers collection, signed acknowledgement and Headteacher Detention.

Further breaches: dealt with under the Behaviour Policy.

Appendix 2:

Parent/carers statements following a breach

Statement 1: First breach of the Mobile Phone Policy

St Thomas More is a mobile phone-free school.

Pupil's name: _____ Form: _____

Date of breach: _____

I acknowledge that my child has breached the St Thomas More Catholic Voluntary Academy Mobile Phones and Similar Technology Policy for the first time and that the confiscated device has been returned to me.

I understand that pupils must not have a mobile phone or similar personal communication technology on their person while on the school premises. If a phone is brought for safety while travelling to or from school, it must be switched off completely and placed securely at the bottom of the pupil's school bag before entering the school premises. It must remain switched off and in the bag throughout the school day and must not be switched on or accessed until the pupil has left the premises.

I understand that it is not acceptable for a device to be seen, heard, used or accessed during the school day. This includes making or receiving calls or messages; using a smartwatch, earbuds or another connected device; using another pupil's device; carrying a second device; attempting to conceal use; photographing, filming or recording another person; using a device in toilets or changing rooms; or refusing to hand it over when instructed by a member of staff.

I will reinforce these expectations with my child and understand that any further breach will result in an increased sanction under the policy.

Parent/carers name: _____

Parent/carers signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 2:

Parent/carers statements following a breach

Statement 2: Second breach of the Mobile Phone Policy

St Thomas More is a mobile phone-free school.

Pupil's name: _____ Form: _____

Date of second breach: _____

I acknowledge that my child has breached the St Thomas More Catholic Voluntary Academy Mobile Phones and Similar Technology Policy for a second time and that the confiscated device has been returned to me. I understand that this is now a repeated and serious failure to follow the school's clear expectations and the reasonable instructions given to pupils.

I understand that pupils must not have a mobile phone or similar personal communication technology on their person while on the school premises. If a phone is brought for journey safety, it must be switched off completely and placed securely at the bottom of the pupil's school bag before entry. It must remain there, switched off and inaccessible, for the whole school day and until the pupil has left the premises.

I understand that no use or access is acceptable. This includes calls, messages and notifications; use through smartwatches, earbuds or other connected technology; use of another pupil's device; possession of a second device; concealment; photographing, filming or recording; use in toilets or changing rooms; and refusal to hand over a device immediately when instructed.

I understand that, as a consequence of this second breach, my child will receive a Headteacher Detention. I have discussed the seriousness of this repeated breach with my child and will take steps to ensure that it is not repeated.

I further understand that any subsequent breach will be dealt with using the full scope of the school's Behaviour Policy. Depending on the circumstances, seriousness and persistence of the behaviour, consequences may include isolation, suspension or, in the most serious cases and where the legal test is met, permanent exclusion.

Parent/carers name: _____

Parent/carers signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 3: Visitor information

Use of mobile phones and similar technology in our school

St Thomas More is a mobile phone-free school.

- Keep your device silent and secure while on the school premises.
- Do not use a device where pupils are present unless a member of staff has authorised its use for a legitimate purpose.
- Do not photograph, film or record pupils, their work or staff using a personal device.
- Do not upload or share any image, recording or personal information relating to pupils or staff.
- If you need to make an urgent call, ask reception where you may do so.
- Follow staff instructions and the safeguarding arrangements for any trip or activity you support.
- The school cannot accept responsibility for a visitor's device if it is lost, stolen or damaged.

A full copy of this policy is available from the school office and on the school website.

Appendix 4: Staff responsibilities for mobile-phone use

This appendix provides a clear operational summary for all employees, agency staff, supply staff, volunteers and other adults working on behalf of the school. It should be read alongside the Staff Code of Conduct, Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, Data Protection Policy and Acceptable Use Policy.

Staff are expected to model the calm, professional and purposeful use of technology that the school requires from pupils. Personal mobile phones must not distract staff from teaching, supervision, safeguarding or any other professional responsibility.

What is permissible

A member of staff may:

- keep a personal phone switched off or on silent and stored securely out of sight, normally in a bag, desk, office or staff-only area;
- use a personal phone during an authorised break or non-contact time in a staff-only area where pupils are not present and cannot see or hear the use;
- use a phone briefly and discreetly for an authorised work purpose, such as multi-factor authentication, where another method is not reasonably available;
- use a school-issued device for legitimate school business in accordance with the Staff Code of Conduct, data-protection requirements and the school's acceptable-use arrangements;
- use a personal phone in a genuine emergency, or under an individual arrangement agreed in advance with the Headteacher or appropriate line manager; and
- use an authorised device on an educational visit where this is required by the visit plan, risk assessment or emergency-communication arrangements.

Where any permitted use takes place, it must be necessary, proportionate, professional and as discreet as possible. It must not undermine the school's expectations for pupils.

What is not permissible

A member of staff must not:

- make or receive personal calls, send personal messages, browse social media, shop online, play games or use entertainment content while teaching, supervising pupils, on duty or otherwise responsible for pupils;
- use a personal phone in a classroom, corridor, dining area, playground, assembly, liturgy or other pupil-facing space, except for an authorised work purpose or genuine emergency;
- use a personal device to photograph, film or make an audio recording of a pupil, a pupil's work or any information that could identify a pupil;
- store school photographs, recordings, personal data or confidential information on a personal device;
- use a personal number, personal email account, social-media account or messaging application to communicate with a pupil;

- give a personal telephone number or social-media details to a pupil or accept a pupil as a contact or follower;
- use personal contact details to communicate with a parent/carers
- allow a pupil to use, hold or access the staff member's personal or school-issued phone; or
- use any mobile device in a way that breaches confidentiality, safeguarding expectations, professional boundaries, copyright, data-protection law or the Staff Code of Conduct.

Photographs, video and audio

Only school-owned or expressly authorised equipment may be used to create images, video or audio involving pupils. The activity must have a legitimate educational or school purpose, appropriate consent or another lawful basis must be in place, and the material must be transferred to and retained within approved school systems. Staff must follow the school's requirements for publication, retention and deletion.

Communication and professional boundaries

Communication with pupils and parents/carers must take place through approved school systems, accounts and contact routes. Staff must not use personal messaging services or social-media platforms for school communication.

Trips, visits and emergencies

The visit leader will set out which devices may be carried and used. Where a personal phone is authorised for emergency use, staff must protect their personal number where possible, must not use the device to create images or recordings of pupils, and must not store confidential information on it. School-issued devices should be used wherever they are available and suitable.

Safeguarding, loss and security

A lost, stolen or compromised school device, or any personal device that may contain school information, must be reported immediately to the Headteacher, DSL and the person responsible for data protection, as appropriate. Staff must use a secure passcode, keep devices physically secure and follow instructions about software updates, encryption and remote access.

Staff must not investigate suspected safeguarding material on a device unless specifically authorised and it is lawful and necessary to do so. Concerns must be referred immediately to the DSL or a deputy. Staff must never intentionally view, copy, store or forward a suspected nude or semi-nude image of a child.

Failure to follow these expectations

Failure to follow these requirements may be addressed through management action or the school's disciplinary procedures. A serious breach involving safeguarding, confidentiality, professional boundaries, data protection or inappropriate images may also be referred to the Local Authority Designated Officer, the police, the Disclosure and Barring Service, a professional regulator or another relevant agency, as appropriate.