Painsley Catholic College

Mobile Technology and Social Media Policy (inclusive of mobile phones)

September 2025 – 2026

Approved by:	Local Governing Body	**Date:** Wednesday 18th March 2026
Last reviewed on:	March 2026	
Next review due by:	March 2027	

Key Updates

(Updated in line with national safeguarding guidance)

Key updates reflect:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023
- DfE Mobile Phones in Schools Guidance 2026
- Searching, Screening and Confiscation Guidance 2022
- Staffordshire Children's Safeguarding Partnership

Context

Over recent years, mobile phones and personal digital devices have become a significant source of distraction in schools across the country. While these devices have clear benefits for communication and safety outside school hours, their use during the school day can negatively affect learning, wellbeing and social interaction.

Department for Education research and national guidance highlight several key concerns which reflect our own experience:

Disruption to learning
Notifications, social media and messaging interrupt lessons and reduce pupils' ability to concentrate.

Safeguarding and wellbeing
Mobile phones can facilitate cyberbullying, inappropriate online behaviour, exposure to harmful content and pressures associated with social media.

Social development
Break and lunchtimes are important opportunities for pupils to develop friendships, communication skills and positive relationships. These opportunities are diminished when mobile devices dominate pupils' attention.

Approval

This Mobile Technology and Social Media Policy for Painsley Catholic College has been approved by the Local Governing Body in line with national safeguarding expectations and local need to safeguard and promote the welfare of all members of the Painsley Catholic College community when using mobile devices or social media both in school and beyond the school site.

We believe in exceptional communication and recognise the important role that technology plays in modern life. However, technology must always be used safely, responsibly and in a way that supports learning and wellbeing.

This policy applies to learners, parents/carers and all staff, including the Local Governing Body, Regional Governance Group, Board of Directors, leadership team, teachers, support staff, volunteers, visitors, contractors and anyone working on behalf of the College.

The policy applies to **all use of mobile technology and social media**, both **on and off the school site**, where such use impacts safeguarding, behaviour, wellbeing or the reputation of the College.

Aims of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to safeguard and promote the welfare of all members of the Painsley Catholic College community when using mobile technology or social media.

As a Catholic school, the policy reflects the principles of **Catholic Social Teaching**, particularly **Human Dignity**. Every person's life and dignity must be respected and supported. Human dignity requires that individuals are able to grow and flourish in all aspects of their lives without harm, intimidation or exploitation.

Painsley Catholic College recognises that **online safety is a key component of safeguarding** and is embedded within the school's wider safeguarding culture.

The College therefore aims to:

• Protect pupils and staff from risks associated with mobile technology and online platforms.
• Promote safe, responsible and respectful use of technology.
• Support pupils to develop digital resilience and critical thinking when engaging online.
• Reduce distractions that negatively affect learning.
• Prevent misuse of technology including cyberbullying, harassment and exploitation.
• Support parents in keeping children safe when using technology outside school.

Learners will be supported through the **PSHE**, **RSHE and personal development curriculum and safeguarding education** to develop knowledge and skills relating to:

- online risks
- misinformation and fake news
- online exploitation
- harmful online communities
- extremist or radicalising content
- safe use of artificial intelligence technologies.

Staff are supported through safeguarding training, the staff code of conduct and this policy to ensure they safeguard themselves, pupils and the reputation of the College and Catholic Multi-Academy Trust.

Monitoring

Technology evolves rapidly and therefore this policy will be reviewed **at least annually**.

The policy may also be reviewed following:

- national safeguarding updates
- local safeguarding concerns
- changes to filtering and monitoring systems
- developments in technology or social media.

In line with safeguarding expectations within Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025, the College maintains **appropriate filtering and monitoring systems** to safeguard pupils when using school technology.

Online safety incidents and concerns are monitored and reported through safeguarding systems.

Oversight of online safety sits with:

- Mrs Waugh – Principal
- Mr Darren Bullock – Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)
- Mrs Sharon Barker – Senior Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (SDDSL)
- Miss Lisa Dudley – Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL)

The **Safeguarding Governor – Mrs J Stubbs** provides governance oversight.

Updates are provided through:

- safeguarding reports to governors
- Local Governing Body visits
- the Principal's safeguarding report
- safeguarding committee meetings

Responding to Policy Breaches

All members of the community are expected to report concerns about mobile technology or social media misuse.

Reports may be made through:

Parents/carers

- contacting the safeguarding team via the wellbeing email
- contacting the DSL
- contacting the student's Pastoral Lead

Pupils

- speaking to any member of staff
- speaking to their Emmaus Tutor or Pastoral Lead
- speaking directly to the safeguarding team or via the wellbeing email address

Staff

- recording concerns through the **MyConcern safeguarding system** and speaking directly to the safeguarding team.

All concerns will be treated seriously and handled in line with the safeguarding policy.

Where necessary the DSL may seek advice from the **Education Safeguarding Advice Service (ESAS)**.

Where criminal activity may have occurred, the school will contact the police via **101**, or **999** in cases of immediate risk.

Staff are reminded of the College **Whistleblowing Policy** should they believe concerns are not being addressed appropriately.

Following incidents, the leadership team will review lessons learned and implement improvements to policy, procedures or curriculum where required.

Use of Personal Devices

Expectations of Learners

Painsley Catholic College recognises that mobile communication forms part of everyday life. However, within school such technology must be used **safely, responsibly and in accordance with safeguarding expectations**.

Personal devices include (but are not limited to):

- mobile phones
- smart watches
- tablets
- wireless headphones or earbuds
- gaming devices
- any device capable of recording, communication or internet access.

All devices brought onto site remain the **responsibility of the user**.

Members of the community should:

• keep devices secure
• use passwords or PIN protection
• not share devices with others.

The College accepts **no responsibility for loss, theft or damage** to personal devices brought on site.

In line with national expectations within DfE Mobile Phones in Schools Guidance 2026, Painsley Catholic College has made the decision that **students in statutory education (Years 7-11) must keep mobile phones switched off and stored in their bags for the duration of the school day**.

As students enter the College:

- phones must be **switched off**
- phones must be **placed in bags**

Phones may only be accessed **once pupils have left the College site**.

Any phone **seen on site (whether switched on or off)** will be confiscated and held centrally until **collected by a parent or carer**.

Devices should never be visible at any point during the College day.

Bespoke arrangements will be made for pupils who require a phone as part of a **medical care plan**.

Students are expected to manage organisation and communication responsibly by:

- Checking homework, detentions, and timetables before arriving at school or the night before
- Ensuring ParentPay accounts are topped up in advance of the school day

During the College day, if a student **needs to contact home or feels unwell** they must go to **Student Enquiries**, where staff will contact parents on their behalf.

Personal contact with parents during the College day is **not permitted**. If contact with home is required, this will be facilitated through the appropriate College channels.

The sending of abusive or inappropriate messages or content via mobile devices is strictly forbidden and will be addressed under the **Behaviour Policy (Values and Expectations policy)** and **Anti-Bullying Policy**.

Any mobile phone or personal electronic device seen, heard, or used anywhere on site will be confiscated.

Confiscated devices will be:

- Held securely by the College
- Returned only to a parent or carer

Sixth Form students are permitted to use their mobile phones within designated Sixth Form study areas and the Sixth Form canteen. Mobile phones may also be used during lessons when their use is directed or approved by the member of staff. However, Sixth Form students are expected to act as role models within the school community and must demonstrate respect for younger students who are subject to different mobile phone rules. Therefore; when moving around the wider school site Sixth Form students are asked to place their phones out of sight or so as not to undermine or challenge the expectations placed on other year groups.

Expectations of Staff

Staff must use mobile technology in accordance with:

- safeguarding expectations
- the Staff Code of Conduct
- data protection legislation.

Staff should:

• keep personal devices secure during lessons
• keep phones on silent during lesson time
• disable Bluetooth or AirDrop visibility
• not use personal devices during teaching time.

Staff must **only use school-provided equipment** to:

- take photos or videos of pupils
- communicate with parents
- conduct teaching and learning activities.

In exceptional circumstances staff may need access to their phone during the day, for example:

- emergency contact regarding their own child
- urgent family circumstances.

Any arrangements must be agreed with the **Principal**.

Staff must **not process school or personal data on personal devices**, nor enter such information into **generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT)** unless approved within school systems.

If a staff member is suspected of storing illegal material or committing an offence using a device, the **police and Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)** will be informed.

Support for Learners

Pupils will be taught about safe use of mobile technology through:

- PSHE
- RSHE
- safeguarding education
- personal development curriculum.

Pupils in statutory education (Years 7-11) must **not use mobile phones or personal devices anywhere on the school site**.

Mobile phones are **not permitted in examinations** and must be stored according to exam regulations.

Staff may confiscate devices where there is reason to believe a pupil is breaching school rules or safeguarding policies.

In line with Searching, Screening and Confiscation Guidance 2022, staff may search a device where there are reasonable grounds to believe it contains:

- pornographic images

- evidence of an offence
- material that may cause harm.

If illegal material is suspected the device will be handed to police.

Visitors

Visitors, volunteers and contractors must follow this policy when on site.
Staff should challenge concerns and report them to the **Principal or DSL**.
If images are shared online the school may require immediate removal.
The school reserves the right to **ban photography at events** if safeguarding concerns arise.

Use of Social Media

Expectations

Social media includes:

- social networking platforms
- messaging apps
- gaming chat services
- blogs and forums
- video and image sharing sites.

All members of the school community are expected to use social media **positively and responsibly**.

Threatening, abusive or defamatory content relating to members of the school community is unacceptable and may result in sanctions.

The College manages internet access on the school devices using filtering and monitoring systems.

Personal social media use during the school day is **not permitted for staff or pupils**.

Staff and Social Media

Staff must maintain professional boundaries online.

Staff must not:

- contact pupils or parents via personal social media accounts
- accept friend requests from current pupils
- share confidential school information online.

Staff should:

- use strong privacy settings
- avoid location sharing
- maintain professional conduct online.

Any concerns about online conduct by staff must be reported to the **Principal**.

Serious allegations may be referred to the **Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)**.

Learners and Social Media

Learners will be taught how to:

- protect personal information
- recognise online manipulation and exploitation
- block and report harmful content
- understand age restrictions on platforms.

Concerns regarding pupils' online behaviour will be addressed through safeguarding and behaviour procedures.

Official School Social Media

Official platforms currently include:

- Facebook
- Instagram

Only authorised staff may manage official accounts.

All communication must:

- be professional
- be transparent
- follow safeguarding and data protection rules
- ensure appropriate consent for images.

Links with other policies

This policy should be read alongside:

- Safeguarding Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Child-on-Child Abuse Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Behaviour Policy (Values and Expectations)
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- ICT Security Policy
- CCTV Policy

Monitoring and Review

The policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure it remains aligned with national safeguarding guidance and supports the wellbeing of pupils.

This policy is reviewed regularly to ensure it:

- Remains aligned with national guidance

- Supports student wellbeing and behaviour
- Reflects the values and expectations of Painsley Catholic College

These expectations exist to **keep everyone safe, focused, and able to learn well** while at school. We thank students, parents, and carers for their continued support in upholding high standards that allow our community to flourish.

Appendix 1

Acceptable Use Agreement for Pupils

You must obey the following rules if you bring your mobile phone to school:

- Year 7-11 pupils - You must switch off your mobile phone as soon as you enter school site (not just put on 'silent') and phones must be placed in bags. Your phone must remain off and, in your bag, until you leave the school site at the end of the school day.

- Sixth Form students – You are permitted to use your mobile phones within designated Sixth Form study areas and the Sixth Form canteen. Mobile phones may also be used during lessons when their use is directed or approved by the member of staff. However, you are expected to act as role models within the school community and must demonstrate respect for younger students who are subject to different mobile phone rules. When moving around the wider school site or in areas where younger students are present, you should use your phones discreetly and responsibly so as not to undermine or challenge the expectations placed on other year groups.

- You may not use your mobile phone in the toilets or changing rooms. This is to protect the privacy and welfare of other pupils.

- You cannot take photos or recordings (either video or audio) of school staff or other pupils without their consent.

- Avoid sharing your contact details with people you don't know, and don't share other people's contact details without their consent.

- Don't share your phone's passwords or access codes with anyone else.

- Don't use your mobile phone to bully, intimidate or harass anyone. This includes bullying, harassing or intimidating pupils or staff via:
  - Email
  - Text/messaging app
  - Social media

- Don't use your phone to send or receive anything that may be criminal. For instance, by 'sexting'.

- Rules on bullying, harassment, and intimidation apply to how you use your mobile phone even when you aren't in school.

- Don't use vulgar, obscene or derogatory language while on the phone or when using social media. This language is not permitted under the school's behaviour policy.

- Don’t use your phone to view or share pornography or other harmful content.

- You must comply with a request by a member of staff to switch off, or turn over, a phone. Refusal to comply is a breach of the school’s behaviour policy (values and expectations) and will be dealt with accordingly.

- Mobile phones are not permitted in any internal or external exam or test environment. If you have a mobile phone, the expectations will be to follow the school policy and have your phone turned off and in your school bag. Bringing a phone into the test room can result in your exam being declared invalid.

Appendix 2

Template Visitor Information Slip

Use of mobile phones in our school

- Please keep your mobile phone on silent while on the school grounds
- Please do not use phones where pupils are present. If you must use your phone, you may go to reception
- Do not take photos or recordings of pupils
- Do not use your phone in lessons, or when around pupils.

The school accepts no responsibility for phones that are lost, damaged or stolen while you are on the school grounds. A full copy of our mobile phone policy is available from the school office and on the school website.