

Mobile Phone Policy



CATERHAM
SCHOOL



CATERHAM
PREP

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1. Our Ethos: Intentionality, Balance, and Partnership

At Caterham School, our approach to technology is inherently positive. We believe in equipping our pupils with the digital skills necessary to thrive in the future, while actively teaching them the value of digital wellbeing, self-regulation, and intentional technology use.

To support a focused learning environment, protect mental health, and encourage face-to-face connection, we partner closely with parents to establish clear boundaries. Our core guiding principle for personal devices across the campus is simple: **'On site, phone free.'**

2. The Core Principle: 'On site, phone free'

Mobile phones and personal internet-enabled wearable technology (including smartwatches, fitness trackers with communication features and headphones) must not be visible or audible around the school site during the school day. A phone that is heard ringing or buzzing is a breach of this rule in the same way as one that is seen.

- **The School Day:** This restriction applies from the moment a pupil arrives on site until they leave it at the end of the day. It encompasses arrival before registration, all lessons, transition periods, registration, break times, lunchtimes and any time spent on site after the final bell.
- **Wearable Technology:** We do not advise bringing wearable tech into school, however, if brought to school, then it must either be stored away or kept strictly in flight mode (or an equivalent disconnected state) throughout the day. Staff are not expected to verify that a device is in flight mode. A watch that is simply being worn will be left alone; a watch that lights up, vibrates, or is being read or tapped will be treated in the same way as a phone.
- **Parental Partnership:** To maintain proper supervision and security, all communication between parents and children during school hours must be routed through School Reception. Outside of the formal school day, pupils are welcome to call their parents as necessary.

3. Expectations by Year Group

Pupils across the school are equipped with school iPads, providing excellent access to technology for educational purposes as directed by staff. As such, there is no requirement for personal mobile phone use during the school day. Where pupils require access to a mobile phone for medical reasons, this will be permitted, upon the advice of medical professionals.

Special educational needs and disabilities: Some pupils use headphones or ear defenders to manage sensory needs and to regulate. Where this is the case they are permitted, and staff will not challenge a pupil for wearing them. The School will make reasonable adjustments to this policy in accordance with its duties under the Equality Act 2010.

Prep School (Reception – Year 6)

- **Travel Exceptions:** If a pupil needs a phone or wearable device for safety while travelling (e.g., public transport or school bus), the device must be handed in at Reception immediately upon arrival. A register of phones will be kept and any phones handed in will be stored securely and collected at the end of the school day.

- In the EYFS, personal mobile phones, smartwatches and other personal devices with imaging, recording or sharing capabilities must not be used while caring for children and must be stored securely in accordance with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. EYFS pupils are not permitted to bring personal internet-enabled devices into school.

First to Fifth Year

- **Storage:** All mobile phones, whether 'smart' or otherwise must be kept on silent or turned off, and kept securely in lockers throughout the entire school day.
- **Blackout:** Pupils who choose to bring a smart phone to school must also download the Blackout app which will 'black out' all apps and functions apart from SMS Messages and Phone. Blackout will operate during school hours: 8.30am-4.00pm. Blackout is not active before 8.30am or after 4.00pm. The 'On site, phone free' rule continues to apply at those times and is enforced by staff.
- **Phone free:** Some pupils may choose not to bring a phone to school at all. Where this is the case, parents will be asked to confirm this is the case.
- **Brick phone:** Pupils may instead choose to bring a phone without smartphone functions. Pupils in the First to Fifth Year therefore have three options: a smartphone with the Blackout app installed, a brick phone, or no phone at all.

Sixth Form

As part of preparing our oldest pupils for life beyond Caterham, we encourage self-regulation and intentional use of technology. Sixth Formers may use their mobile phones and wearable technology but **only** within the designated **Sixth Form Centre** and **Sixth Form Silent Work Room**.

- **Gym Exception:** Sixth Formers are permitted to use their mobile phones for the purpose of signing into the school gym and when exercising there.
- **Campus-Wide:** Outside of the Sixth Form Centre and the gym sign-in point, the 'On site, phone free' rule applies completely. Phones must not be visible in corridors, common areas, or the refectory.
- **Blackout:** Pupils can **opt** to download the Blackout app on their phones, which will 'black out' all apps and functions apart from SMS Messages and Phone. Blackout will operate during school hours, 8.30am-4.00pm.
- **Café:** Pupils should be aware that they cannot use their phones to pay in the café but must instead use a debit card or their school ID card.

4. School Day Trips, Matches, and Fixtures

We recognise that off-site trips and sports fixtures offer excellent opportunities for pupils to practise intentional, responsible tech use.

- **Permitted Use:** Pupils from the First to Fifth Years are permitted to bring their mobile phones on school day trips and sports fixtures. Devices may be used during travel times for listening to music, taking photos (strictly for personal memories, not for social media), and contacting parents regarding return times. If staff feel that phones are being used inappropriately, they may confiscate a pupils' phone for the duration of the trip.
- **Staff Discretion:** Once at the venue, fixture, or tournament, phone use reverts entirely to the discretion of the trip leader or sports coach. Devices must be put away when instructions are being given or when group engagement is required. Where phones are permitted, pupils must adhere to the Schools' Acceptable Use policy.

5. Boarding and Residential Trips

Our boarding houses and residential trips are spaces where we heavily emphasise community, wellbeing, and face-to-face connection.

- **Blackout:** Boarders in First to Fifth Year who choose to own a smart phone must download the Blackout app, which will 'black out' all apps and functions apart from SMS Messages and Phone. Blackout will operate during school hours, 8.30am-4.00pm.
- **Day-to-Day Boarding:** Boarders are welcome to use their phones to connect with family and friends **when inside the boarding houses** during free time. However, phones are strictly prohibited around the school site, including in the refectory at all times, including weekend mealtimes.
- **Overnight Rest:** To protect sleep hygiene and mental wellbeing, all pupils **up to and including the Fifth Year** are required to hand in their mobile devices at a set time each evening.
- **Residential Trips and Flexible Boundaries:** On overnight school trips, the same overnight hand-in rule applies for all pupils up to the Fifth Year. Additionally, trip leaders or Housemasters/Mistresses reserve the right to define other 'device-free' windows during the day or weekend to foster group cohesion, balance, and wellbeing.

6. Enforcement and Sanctions

When a device is visible outside of permitted zones, it undermines the focused environment we promise to our community and can compromise our rigorous safeguarding standards which exist to protect pupils from online harms and digital distractions. In such cases, the following structured approach applies. This section applies to the Senior School. Where a pupil in the Prep School breaches this policy, including by bringing or using a mobile phone or personal internet-enabled device contrary to the arrangements set out above, the matter will be managed in accordance with the Prep School Behaviour Policy.

- If a pupil is seen or heard using or holding their phone/connected wearable device during the school day, it will be confiscated immediately.

The device will be taken to reception and will be left there securely. The pupil may collect it at the end of the school day, signing to say they have taken the device. The pupil will also receive a detention.

The detention is issued by the pupil's Head of Year and recorded on CHIP. Heads of Year take individual circumstances into account at every stage, including special educational needs, disabilities and medical needs, in line with the Behaviour Policy.

- **Refusal to hand a device over:** the member of staff will take the pupil's name, state the expectation once and refer the matter to the pupil's Head of Year, where it will be dealt with as defiance rather than as a phone matter. Staff are not expected to pursue the device themselves.
- **Searching:** staff do not search pupils or their belongings for a mobile phone, and do not ask a pupil to empty a pocket or open a bag. Where a member of staff believes a pupil has a device and the pupil denies it, the matter is referred to the pupil's Head of Year.
- **Confiscated devices are not switched on, unlocked or examined.** Any safeguarding concern arising from a device is passed to the Designated Safeguarding Lead rather than investigated.
- **Proportionality:** in confiscating a device the School will consider whether the sanction is proportionate, taking account of the pupil's age and any special educational needs, disabilities or individual circumstances.
- **Uncollected devices:** a device that is not collected at the end of the school day will be held securely at Reception overnight and collected before registration the following morning. Devices are not sent home with staff.
- **Who enforces:** non-teaching staff, peripatetic and visiting staff, report a breach to the nearest member of teaching staff or to Reception rather than confiscating a device themselves.
- Earphones and headphones should not be worn around the campus, unless instructed to be used as part of a lesson activity or in the Sixth Form Centre. If used around school, they will be confiscated, along with the device they are paired with. This does not apply to pupils who use headphones or ear defenders as a reasonable adjustment for special educational needs or a disability.
- If a pupil in the First to Fifth Year removes the Blackout app from their phone or unblocks the App without a valid reason, they will be issued with a detention.
- The café will not be allowed to accept payment from pupils through mobile phones. Pupils, including Sixth Formers, should use debit cards or their school lanyard to make purchases.

7. Staff expectations

All school staff should refrain from using their personal mobile phones for leisure in front of pupils during the school day. Using a phone for school purposes is different: registering a club, checking a duty rota, and multi-factor authentication are all examples of reasonable use. All staff are expected to enforce this policy consistently.

Appendix

Boarding Houses - Mobile Phones and Personal Electronic Devices

This policy supplements the **Caterham School Mobile Phone Policy**. The school rule, 'On site, phone free', applies to boarders during the school day exactly as it applies to every other pupil. What follows sets out how devices are managed in the boarding houses outside those hours.

1. Our approach

We recognise that mobile phones and personal electronic devices are an important part of boarding life. Our boarding community is international. Boarders must be able to contact their families at times appropriate to the family's time zone, and House staff are authorised to apply the arrangements below flexibly for that purpose.

However, we also recognise that unrestricted use of internet-enabled devices can work against a young person's wellbeing and progress. It displaces face-to-face relationships within the house, it compromises sleep, and it erodes the conditions in which sustained academic work is possible. The school therefore accepts a responsibility to support boarders in developing habits of use that serve them, rather than leaving a teenager to manage that alone.

2. Where and when boarders may use their phones

- **Inside the boarding houses, during free time.**
- **Around the school site from 4.30pm, to contact home.** Boarding time begins at 4.30pm. From then, a boarder may use their phone elsewhere on site.
- **Until 4.30pm, phones stay away around the site.** Between 8.30am and 4.00pm the school day rule applies in full, exactly as it does for day pupils, and it continues to apply until boarding time begins.
- **In the refectory, at breakfast only.** Phones may be used at breakfast. They are not used at lunch or at supper, on any day of the week, including weekends.
- **Not during supervised prep.** Pupils should not have access to phones while completing prep in supervised settings.
- **Not during weekend activity windows.** Phone-free periods run around organised activities, trips and fixtures.

Housemasters and Housemistresses may define further device-free windows during the day or weekend where it would benefit the house.

3. Overnight hand-in and charging

Boarders in the Third, Fourth and Fifth Years hand in all mobile phones and personal electronic devices, including smartwatches, 45 minutes before their scheduled bedtime.

Devices are stored in secure, lockable cabinets within the house. The cabinets have integrated power, so devices charge safely overnight and are returned fully powered the following morning.

4. Sixth Form

Sixth Form boarders are not required to hand in their devices overnight. Part of preparing pupils for life beyond school is letting them take responsibility for their own use and learn to manage it as young adults.

Where it becomes clear that a Sixth Former is finding that difficult, and it is affecting their sleep, their academic work or their morning punctuality, their Housemaster or Housemistress may ask them to hand in their devices for an agreed period. This is a pastoral step rather than a sanction.

We keep this arrangement under review and may extend overnight hand-in to the Sixth Form if that proves necessary.

5. Keeping in touch with family

Boarders are able to contact their family in private, at a time that suits both them and the people they are calling. For families in other time zones, House staff will agree an appropriate time.

During the school day, between 8.30am and 4.00pm, messages in either direction go through School Reception, as they do for every pupil. Urgent messages always reach a pupil quickly.

If managing phone use ever makes it difficult for a parent to reach their child, they should contact their child's Housemaster or Housemistress to make other arrangements.

6. Medical and SEND needs, and raising a concern

Medical needs. Where a boarder needs access to their phone for a medical reason, for example continuous glucose monitoring, this is permitted on medical advice. The arrangement is agreed with the Housemaster or Housemistress and recorded.

SEND. Boarders who use headphones or ear defenders to manage sensory needs and to regulate may do so. The school will make reasonable adjustments to this policy in accordance with its duties under the Equality Act 2010.

Raising a concern. A boarder may always access their phone where this is necessary to raise a concern with a member of staff about something that has happened online, including after hand-in. No boarder should ever feel they must wait until morning to tell someone.

7. Blackout

Boarders in the Third to Fifth Years who choose to bring a smartphone to school during the day must install the Blackout app, which blocks non-essential apps during the school day. It runs from 8.30am to 4.00pm on the school's schedule, so it is active wherever the pupil happens to be. For Sixth Formers, Blackout is optional.

Blackout is not active in the evening. Device use in the boarding house, and around the site from 4.30pm, is governed by house routine and by this policy, not by the app.

8. Filtering, mobile data and parental controls

- **The school network.** Our Wi-Fi is filtered and monitored, as are the school-issued iPads provided to Third, Fourth and Fifth Year pupils.
- **The device itself.** Blackout restricts apps on the phone during the school day whatever the connection, including mobile data, so it is not avoided by switching off Wi-Fi.

However, neither of these filters a pupil's general browsing over their own mobile data outside those hours.

We strongly encourage all boarding families to set up parental controls before their child arrives. We recommend the built-in tools, Apple Screen Time and Family Sharing, Google Family Link or Life360, which are the best supported and work alongside Blackout.

9. If the rules are not followed

- Matters arising in the boarding house are dealt with by the Housemaster or Housemistress, in line with the Behaviour Policy.
- A device not handed in, or used after hand-in, may be held until the following morning.
- Breaches during the school day follow the Mobile Phone Policy: the device goes to Reception and the pupil's Head of Year is informed.
- Individual circumstances are taken into account at every stage, including medical needs and SEND.

10. Residential trips and fixtures

On overnight school trips the same hand-in arrangement applies to all pupils up to and including the Fifth Year. Trip leaders, Housemasters and Housemistresses may set further device-free windows during the day or weekend.

For sports fixtures and team travel, please see the separate guidance for staff taking sports teams, which sets out what applies on weekdays and on Saturdays.

To be read alongside the Mobile Phone Policy, the Behaviour Policy and the school's Acceptable Use policy.