

THREE RIVERS ACADEMY – PHONE POLICY AND PROTOCOLS (IMPLEMENTED FROM SEPTEMBER 2026)
Date of review: June 2026 Next due for review: July 2027 Related Policies: THPT Respectful Relationships and Behaviour Policy; Three Rivers Academy Local Behaviour Protocols

1. Principle

Three Rivers Academy is a **mobile phone-free school**. Mobile phones must not be seen, used, or heard at any time on the school site by students.

This approach supports a calm, safe and purposeful environment in which all students can learn free from distraction and safeguarding risks.

For the purposes of this policy, “mobile phones” include:

- Mobile phones
- Smart watches with communication capability
- Any device capable of sending/receiving messages, accessing the internet, or recording audio/video

This policy is aligned with Department for Education guidance on mobile phones in schools (updated 2026) and the Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026, which requires schools to have regard to that guidance.

2. School recommendation for Years 7–9 students

We recommend that Years 7–9 students do not own a smartphone, in line with the Smartphone Free Movement.

If students own a smartphone, we strongly advise that they do not bring it to school. Instead, we recommend that parents who wish to remain in contact with their children on the way to and from school provide them with a basic “brick phone”, which can make and receive calls and send and receive text messages, but which does not have internet access.

We are currently exploring Three Rivers Academy becoming a smartphone-free school for all Year 7 students from September 2027.

3. Communication with Families

Parents and carers are expected to:

- Support the school's mobile phone-free approach
- Avoid contacting students directly during the school day
- Contact the school office in case of urgent messages

The school will communicate this policy clearly and consistently to ensure shared expectations.

4. Mobile phone protocols for students

Mobile phones must not be seen, used, or heard at any time on the school site by students. This includes before school, after school, during lessons, between lessons and during break and lunch times.

Mobile phones may be brought to school but must remain switched off and unseen at all times. Examples of a phone being visible includes being partially visible in a pocket (including an outline).

Mobile phones must be switched off (not simply on 'silent mode').

We strongly recommend that, if brought to school, student phones are kept in bags or lockers.

Students attending after-school activities are allowed to use their mobile phones after 4pm to contact parents or carers.

5. Consequences

If a phone is seen, heard or used (including contacting parents or guardians), the following actions will be taken:

- The phone will be confiscated and handed in to the Year Office or Student Services, where it will be kept securely
- The phone will be returned to the student at 3:00 pm on the same day (or 4:00 pm if the student has detention or is in Internal Suspension)
- A confiscation log will be issued by the Senior Pastoral Leader or Student Services when putting the phone away (for information only; no sanction)

If a phone is seen, heard or used after 3 pm on the school site, the student will receive a confiscation log and will need to put the phone away immediately.

6. Repeated Confiscations (3 or more in one academic year)

If a student's phone is confiscated **three times in the same academic year**, the following arrangements will apply on the third offence:

- Overnight confiscation
- Parental meeting

Any additional offence will be sanctioned by an overnight confiscation.

If the overnight confiscation falls on a Friday, the phone will be returned to the student at the end of Friday and confiscated overnight on the following school day.

In the case of repeat confiscations, the school reserves the right to implement a long-term mobile phone ban for the student, during which the student will not be allowed to bring a mobile phone (other than a simple 'brick phone') onto the school site.

7. Refusal to Comply

If a student refuses to hand in their phone when it is used, seen or heard, the student will be placed in Internal Suspension until they comply. If the phone is not handed in by the end of the day, the student will be issued a fixed-term suspension of at least one day. Upon return from suspension, the student will complete a full day in Internal Suspension and will need to hand in their phone (this is a standard expectation for any student placed in Internal Suspension).

In the case of a refusal to comply with an overnight confiscation following a fixed-term suspension, as set out above, the parent will be required to attend a reintegration meeting on site during which the phone will be handed in and kept overnight. The student will remain in Internal Suspension until such a time that the phone is handed in by a parent/carer or trusted adult.

Parents are not able to override the rules or the consequences stated above.

8. Mobile phone protocols for Sixth Form students

The school recognises that Sixth Form students have increasing independence; however, the expectation of a mobile phone-free environment during the school day applies equally to them.

Sixth Form students must not use mobile phones in:

- Lessons (where there are exceptions, e.g. in some practical subjects, use will be tightly restricted, agreed with the Principal, and controlled by the teacher)
- Corridors and social spaces during the school day

Sixth Form students must follow the same expectations as other students regarding storage and non-use.

Sixth Form students are permitted to use their phones in designated Sixth Form social areas.

In designated Sixth Form study areas, Sixth Form students are allowed to use mobile phones for study purposes only.

Any permitted access will:

- Not undermine the school's mobile phone-free environment
- Be consistent with safeguarding, behaviour, and learning expectations

9. Consequences for Sixth Form students

If a Sixth Form student is found in breach of the above, the following will apply:

- The student must put the phone away immediately
- A member of staff will issue a confiscation log
- If the student refuses to comply or receives 3 logs in one half-term, they will be subject to the same consequences as those applicable to other students, as set out above

10. Students with Medical Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

The school will make reasonable adjustments to this policy in line with the Equality Act 2010.

Exceptions may be agreed where a mobile device is required for:

- Medical monitoring or treatment (for example, diabetes management)

- Communication needs linked to a disability
- Assistive technology supporting learning or independence
- Specific safeguarding requirements

Where an exception is granted:

- It will be formally agreed and documented
- Clear parameters for use will be set
- Staff will be informed to ensure consistent and appropriate application

Any use beyond the agreed parameters will be treated as a breach of the policy.

11. Students with English as an Additional Language (EAL)

The school recognises that some students with EAL may benefit from translation tools. The school will provide appropriate support through:

- Planned classroom strategies
- Access to school-approved devices where necessary
- Teacher and peer support

In exceptional circumstances where a device is required:

- This will be agreed in advance by the school
 - The arrangement will be time-limited and clearly structured
 - It will not undermine the mobile phone-free expectation
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12. Educational Visits and School Trips

Day Trips

The school maintains its expectation of a mobile phone-free environment during educational visits.

During day trips:

- Students must not use mobile phones during the visit, including:
 - Travel time (unless otherwise directed by staff)
 - Activities and supervised free time

- Phones must be:
 - Switched off
 - Stored securely as directed by staff

Restricted Access

Limited access to mobile phones may be permitted at the discretion of staff for essential communication purposes only, for example:

- Confirming return times with parents or carers
- Informing parents or carers of unexpected delays
- Where staff deem it necessary for safeguarding reasons

This access will:

- Be time-limited and supervised
- Be clearly instructed by staff
- Not extend to general social or recreational use

Students must not independently access or use their phones at any point unless explicitly authorised.

Residential Trips

The school recognises that residential visits require a balanced approach, taking account of students' wellbeing, independence and safeguarding.

The core principle remains that mobile phone use must not undermine the purpose of the visit, the safety of students, or the expectations of behaviour.

General Expectations

- Mobile phones must not be used during scheduled activities
- Phones must not interfere with:
 - Learning experiences
 - Group engagement
 - Rest and sleep routines

Structured and Limited Use

The Trip Leader may permit structured access to mobile phones at defined times, for example a short, scheduled period in the evening to contact parents or carers.

Where this is permitted:

- Timings will be clearly communicated in advance (to students and families)
 - Use will be:
 - Time-limited
 - Supervised or monitored by staff
 - Students may be required to:
 - Hand in phones outside permitted times
 - Store phones securely overnight
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13. Searching and Confiscation

Mobile phones are defined by the school as an item that may be searched for under this policy.

The school will use its legal powers to search for and confiscate mobile phones where students do not comply with this policy.

- Staff may confiscate mobile phones where they are used, seen or heard during the school day, or where storage expectations are not followed
- The Headteacher, and authorised staff, may search a student or their possessions, with or without consent, where there are reasonable grounds to suspect a breach of school rules

All searches and confiscation will be:

- Conducted proportionately, respectfully and in line with safeguarding expectations
- Recorded and followed up in accordance with the THPT Behaviour Policy and DfE guidance
- Communicated to parents and carers where appropriate

This approach is consistent with Department for Education guidance and supports the school's commitment to maintaining a calm, safe and purposeful environment for all students.

14. Equality and Proportionality Statement

The school will apply this policy consistently and fairly, with due regard to:

- The Equality Act 2010
- Individual student needs
- Safeguarding considerations

Any adjustments will be:

- Proportionate
 - Clearly justified
 - Regularly reviewed
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15. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

1. How can my child contact me during the school day if they need to?

Students who need to contact home must do so through the Year Office or Student Services. Staff will support them in making the call. Students must not use their mobile phone to contact home during the school day.

2. How can I contact my child during the school day?

If you need to reach your child, please contact Reception or the relevant Year Office. Messages will be passed on promptly. We ask that parents do not call or message students directly, as this will lead to confiscation.

3. What is the school's responsibility if a phone is lost, stolen or damaged?

Phones are brought to school entirely at the student's own risk. The school cannot accept responsibility for loss, theft or damage. We strongly recommend that expensive devices are not brought to school.

4. Are smartwatches allowed?

Smartwatches that can send messages, access the Internet or receive notifications are treated as smartphones and must be kept out of sight at all times. Basic digital watches are permitted.

5. My child uses their phone for medical reasons. What should I do?

Some students may need reasonable adjustments for medical or SEND needs (for example, diabetes monitoring). These arrangements can be agreed in advance through

the Inclusion Team. Students should not independently decide to use their phone for medical purposes without prior approval.

6. What happens if my child has no locker?

If a student does not have a locker, their phone should be stored in their bag. Being visible in a trouser pocket or outer blazer pocket will result in confiscation.