



William Ransom Primary School

Mobile Phone and Smartwatch Policy 2026

Adopted by Governing Body: Summer 2026

Next review: Summer 2028

Our vision

At William Ransom, every child is empowered to take ownership of their learning – be curious, creative, kind and prepared for life beyond the classroom.

Mobile Phone and Smartwatch Policy

1. Purpose and our approach

William Ransom Primary School wants every child to grow up safe, happy and able to concentrate, both in the classroom and in the wider world. We care about protecting the parts of childhood that matter most: outdoor play, reading, real conversation and friendships built face to face.

There is a growing national consensus that smartphones and similar devices were not designed with children in mind, and that unrestricted use during the school day gets in the way of learning and wellbeing. This policy sets out how we manage phones, smartwatches and similar devices at William Ransom.

We want to be clear about what this policy is, and what it is not. It is not the school telling families how to parent at home. Families remain free to make their own choices about the devices their child owns. What the school can do is decide what comes through our gates, and by doing so make it easier for the many parents who would like to delay giving their child a smartphone but feel under pressure because everyone else seems to have one. Taking this step as a school helps remove that pressure and gives families a genuine choice.

In doing this we are following national guidance and joining a large and growing number of schools, in Hertfordshire and across the country, that have already moved in this direction.

2. The national picture

Our approach is in line with the Department for Education's statutory guidance on mobile phones in schools, which sets a clear expectation that all schools should be mobile phone-free environments by default, with any exception made only where there is good reason. Schools in England now have a legal duty to have regard to this guidance. That duty was created by section 36 of the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026, it came into force on 29 June 2026, and schools are expected to follow the guidance from September 2026. The guidance covers not only mobile phones but other smart technology with similar functionality, which includes devices such as smartwatches. Ofsted has confirmed that headteachers have its full backing to prohibit phones in school, and now looks at a school's phone policy, and how consistently it is applied, as part of inspection.

Because every phone or device is handed in at the office and stored for the day, William Ransom already operates as a mobile phone-free environment during the school day, which meets this national expectation. Our **Bricks for 26** approach, the school's two-stage plan to move the small number of phones that do come onto site toward basic brick phones only, goes a step further. It is set out in full in section 5.

This is not William Ransom acting alone. More than 150,000 families across the UK have signed the Smartphone Free Childhood Parent Pact to delay smartphones at the time of writing, with the total rising steadily and Hertfordshire among the areas leading the way. The number of schools going smartphone-free or brick-only grows each term. Our decision reflects that shared direction, and the concerns raised nationally by the House of Commons Education Committee and the Children's Commissioner about the effect of phones on children's focus, behaviour, exposure to harmful content and mental health. The Royal College of Psychiatrists has also reported on the impact of technology and social media on children's mental health, including exposure to harmful content and reduced time for sleep and for face-to-face contact with family and friends.

3. What we mean by each type of device

To avoid any confusion, this is what we mean by the terms used in this policy.

A smartphone is an internet-connected phone that can browse the web, install apps, use social media and take photos and videos.

A brick phone (sometimes called a basic or feature phone) can make calls and send texts, but cannot browse the internet or install apps, and ideally has no camera. It is worth knowing that some phones which look like brick phones can still reach the internet or take photos. To be certain a phone is call-and-text only, families

can pair it with a 'no data' SIM, which removes internet access altogether. Our Bricks for 26 leaflet and the Smartphone Free Childhood alternatives page list suitable models and SIM options.

A smartwatch is a wrist-worn device that can typically send and receive messages and calls, and may run apps or connect to the internet. Because it does many of the same things as a phone, it falls within this policy.

4. Core rules (Effective Immediately)

These rules apply to every child on the school premises.

- **Eligibility:** only children in Year 5 and Year 6 who travel to and from school independently may bring a device onto the premises. Parents must give written permission on the Going Home Arrangements form beforehand.
- **Hand in on arrival:** all phones, and any other permitted device, must be handed in to the school office before the school day begins. They may not be kept in bags, lockers, coat pockets or trays.
- **Collect at the end of the day:** devices are stored securely in the office and collected by the child at home time.
- **No use anywhere on site:** devices must stay switched off and put away while a child is on the school premises, including straight after collection at the end of the day. Children should wait until they have left the site before turning a phone on or using it.
- **School events outside the school day:** children should not bring or use phones, smartwatches or similar internet-enabled devices at events held on the school site outside normal hours, such as discos and summer fairs.
- **Trips and residentials:** children may not use personal devices during the school day, on local visits, or on overnight residential trips. All communication for these events will go through the school office, both in terms of parents passing on messages concerning their child and staff on the residential passing messages to parents and carers.

Devices are brought onto school premises at the owner's risk. The school cannot accept liability for loss, theft or accidental damage.

5. Our phased approach: Bricks for 26

We know that changing a child's phone takes time and money, so for phones we are moving in two stages. This gives families the chance to plan ahead and, where they wish, to move to a suitable basic phone.

From September 2026 (Phase 1): for any eligible child bringing a phone to school, we strongly recommend a basic brick phone (calls and texts only) rather than a smartphone. Smartphones are strongly discouraged. Smartwatches are not permitted on site, for the reasons set out in section 6.

From September 2027 (Phase 2): smartphones will not be permitted on site under any circumstances, except for the specific medical exemptions set out in section 7. Only basic brick phones will be allowed for eligible children, handed in to the office each morning as usual. Smartwatches remain not permitted.

The table below summarises the position at each stage.

Device type	Now	From Sept 2026	From Sept 2027
Smartphones	Permitted (handed in)	Strongly discouraged	Not permitted
Brick phones	Permitted (handed in)	Recommended	Permitted (handed in)
Smartwatches	Permitted (handed in)	Not permitted	Not permitted

6. Why smartwatches are handled differently

Several parents have asked why smartwatches are removed from September 2026, while the change for smartphones is phased over two years. It is a fair question, and the reasons are practical.

A phone can be handed in and kept in the office for the day. A smartwatch is worn on the wrist, so managing it fairly would mean repeatedly asking children to remove and hand in a personal item, which is intrusive and very hard to do consistently. Many smartwatches can also send and receive messages, take calls and connect to the internet, and staff cannot reliably tell from across a classroom what a particular watch is able to do. The Department for Education's guidance applies not only to phones but to other smart technology with similar functionality, which a messaging or call-capable smartwatch falls within.

For these reasons, allowing smartwatches would make the policy much harder to enforce and less fair for everyone. A single, clear rule, that smartwatches are not worn or used in school, is simpler for children, families and staff, which is why this element is not phased.

7. Medical exemptions

We understand that a small number of children need a device for genuine medical reasons. A common example is a child with diabetes who uses a phone linked to a continuous glucose monitor to track their blood sugar.

Where this applies, parents should contact the headteacher directly. The school will agree a written individual arrangement with the family, setting out how and when the device may be used, limited to its medical purpose, and this will be reviewed as the child's needs change.

These exemptions reflect the school's duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils under the Equality Act 2010, and to support pupils with medical conditions under the Children and Families Act 2014.

8. Enforcement

Any phone, smartwatch or similar device seen in a classroom, on a child, or anywhere on site outside the office storage will be taken to the school office. In line with Department for Education guidance, headteachers are backed to confiscate devices where this is a proportionate response. A confiscated device will be held securely and collected in person by a parent or carer, rather than returned to the child that day. Where a device gives any cause for a safeguarding concern, staff will follow the school's child protection procedures.

9. Support for families

We recognise that these changes ask something of families, and we want to make them as straightforward as possible. If you are unsure what to buy, our Bricks for 26 leaflet and the Smartphone Free Childhood alternatives page set out basic phone and SIM options at a range of prices.

If you need to reach your child during the day, you can always call the school office and a message will be passed on. If your child needs to contact you, they can ask at the office. Parents who would like the reassurance of knowing their child has arrived safely can see attendance in real time through the Arbor parent app, once the morning register has been taken.

Learning to manage the school day without a phone, and to solve small problems independently, is an important part of growing up. We will support every child through this change with patience and consistency.

10. References and related policies

- [Department for Education: Mobile phones in schools](#) statutory guidance; became statutory on 29 June 2026, with schools expected to follow it from September 2026.

- [Department for Education: Creating a mobile phone-free environment \(school case studies\)](#) examples of schools already running successful phone-free policies.
- [Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026](#) section 36 places a legal duty on headteachers to have regard to the mobile phone guidance, in force from 29 June 2026.
- [Ofsted: updated guidance on mobile phones and school inspections](#) (January 2026).
- [House of Commons Library: Mobile phones in schools \(England\)](#) a plain-English summary of the guidance and the law.
- [Smartphone Free Childhood](#) including the Parent Pact and the alternatives guide to basic phones and SIMs.
- [Royal College of Psychiatrists: Technology use and the mental health of children and young people \(CR225\)](#).
- [Equality Act 2010](#) the duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils (see medical exemptions, section 7).
- [Children and Families Act 2014](#) the duty to support pupils with medical conditions (see medical exemptions, section 7).
- William Ransom Behaviour Policy and Safeguarding (Child Protection) Policy.