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# Personal Mobile Device Policy for Schools 2025-2028

Education and Learning

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# 1. Introduction

Digital technology is an integral part of the lives of children, young people and families across Perth and Kinross. Data shows that 62% of 8 to 11-year-olds in Scotland own their own mobile phone, rising to 96% for 12 to 15-year-olds. Used responsibly, digital devices such as phones and tablets can be powerful tools to enhance learning and teaching, communication, and social experiences, and may remove barriers to learning for some children and young people. In addition, they can bring a sense of security for parents and carers as their children become more independent in their travel to and from school.

However, children and young people bringing their own digital devices into schools can also create challenges. There is a developing evidence base confirming that digital devices, when used inappropriately, are causing disruption to children and young people's learning and that of their peers and impacting on overall mental health. There has also been an increase in more serious behaviours for example mobile phones being used to bully or harass children, young people and staff. The misuse of mobile technology including the filming of incidents and sharing these on social media is frequently reported in the media with potentially devastating impact on children and young people, their families and the safety and wellbeing of staff. Other risks to wellbeing are presented by the use of mobile phones to contact parents during the school day; current experience in secondary schools indicates that this can impact on the development of resilience, problem solving skills and help-seeking behaviour among young people, as they look for support from family in relation to everyday setbacks and challenges, rather than develop trust in school-based adults.

Digital platforms such as social media and video-sharing tools, games, forums and other messaging apps have made it much easier for anyone to share information online. What a young person sees online can shape how they view the world and impact their overall wellbeing. They may be exposed to misinformation, disinformation as well as content that is not suitable for their age or may cause upset or worry, potentially impacting their overall wellbeing.

In August 2024, the Scottish Government published [Mobile phones: guidance for Scotland's schools](#). This provided schools and local authorities with advice on the development and updating of local policies relating to the use of mobile phones and other digital devices in schools.

## 1.1 Purpose

This policy seeks to support school leaders across Perth & Kinross to develop their own individual school policies, in consultation with local stakeholders including staff, children and young people and their parents and carers, which take account of their local settings and circumstances. In developing a school policy, school leaders should consider the ways in which staff can model safe, respectful and appropriate use of digital devices. Supporting pupils' awareness of safe and secure use of digital technologies is an important means for a school to support development of responsible and global citizens, recognising and respecting children and young people's rights, and creating an anti-bullying culture.

This policy has been developed to link with existing PKC policy and guidance, specifically the [PKC Relationships Statement and Relationships & Behaviour Policy Guidance for Schools](#); the [PKC Anti-bullying Strategy](#); and the [PKC Employee Code of Conduct](#) which links to other policies around data protection and the use of social media ([PKC Social Media Guidelines](#)).

## 1.2 Principles

The principles of this policy are to:

- provide clear information and guidance on the safe, responsible, and legal use of mobile technology,
- support calm and inclusive learning environments that are fully focussed on learning and teaching,
- support the appropriate use of mobile technology to enhance learning,

- protect staff, children, and young people from the consequences of inappropriate use and abuse,
- empower school leaders to develop their own individual policies in partnership with their school communities, aligning these with Perth and Kinross Council (PKC) policy and Scottish Government guidance.

### **1.3 Expected Outcomes**

The expected outcomes of this policy include:

- Enhanced learning and teaching experiences through the responsible use of mobile technology.
- Improved communication and social experiences for children and young people.
- Increased sense of security for children, young people, their parents and carers and staff.
- Support for children and young people who require digital technology to access or support their learning.
- Reduced disruption to learning caused by inappropriate use of digital devices.
- Fewer incidents of bullying, harassment, and misuse of mobile technology.
- Stronger alignment of school policies with local policy and national guidance.

## **2. Consultation Process**

### **2.1 School Consultation in Creating their Own Policy**

Effective implementation of a school Digital Device Policy relies on the support and cooperation of all members of a school community – including staff, children and young people, their parents and carers. To ensure this support and cooperation, it is imperative that schools seek to develop their policies in collaboration with their school community and engage with parent councils and the wider parent forum. This collaboration does not depend upon full agreement from each individual stakeholder for policy creation but broad agreement on outcomes and methodologies.

- Subject to any clearly articulated exceptions, there should be the expectation that the policy would be followed by all children and young people.
- Staff should be relied upon to apply a consistent approach to the implementation of the policy, including any aspects that apply to their own mobile phone use.

### **2.2 PKC Consultation Information – Key Stakeholders and Feedback**

The PKC Consultation Information gathered insights on mobile phone use and access in Perth and Kinross Schools. The consultation involved various stakeholders, including over 2000 children and young people, staff from 47 schools, and parent councils, to understand current practices and opinions on mobile phone policies in schools.

#### **Consultation with Children and Young People**

Primary Mobile Phone Use:

- The majority of children in primary (P5-P7) comply with policies prohibiting mobile phone use during school hours and social times, with a compliance rate of 96%.

- Very little distraction is reported, and 93% of children adhere to the no mobile phone use policy.

#### Secondary Mobile Phone Use:

- Almost all secondary young people (S1-S6) own a mobile phone and use it more frequently, particularly during breaks and lunch.
- Opinions on mobile phone use restrictions vary, but there is a consensus on the importance of safety and learning.

#### Staff Consultation

##### Staff Use and Opinions:

- Staff from 47 schools responded to the consultation.
- In the primary sector, there are clear boundaries, with most schools enforcing a no mobile phone use policy during the school day, including breaks and lunch.
- In the secondary sector, experiences and policies vary more widely, recognising that digital device ownership is more prevalent within this group.

#### Parent Council Consultation

##### Primary Sector Boundaries:

- Most primary schools enforce a strict no mobile phone use policy during the school day, including breaks and lunch.
- Mobile phones brought to primary schools are either kept in bags or stored securely, such as in a teacher's locked cupboard.
- Primary children have requested rules to support the use of mobile phones both in and out of school.

##### Secondary Sector Variability:

- Experiences in the secondary sector vary widely, with digital device ownership being more prevalent among older year groups.

### 2.3 PKC Consultation Conclusions

The consultation revealed that children in primaries generally experience an environment in school with no digital devices, while those in secondary have more varied experiences and opinions. Staff and parent councils support strict policies in primary schools, with secure storage for mobile phones. Secondary schools can face greater potential challenge due to higher levels of mobile phone ownership.

## 3. Standards of Conduct

### 3.1 Definition of Digital Devices

For the purposes of this policy, a "digital device" refers to any electronic equipment capable of storing, processing, or transmitting information. This includes, but is not limited to:

- **Mobile Phones:** Any handheld device that provides voice communication, text messaging, internet access, and multimedia functions.
- **Tablets and E-Readers:** Portable devices with touchscreens used for reading, internet browsing, and running applications.

- **Laptops and Netbooks:** Portable computers designed for personal use, including internet browsing, document creation, and multimedia consumption.
- **Wearable Technology:** Devices such as smartwatches and fitness trackers that can connect to the internet and other devices to provide notifications, health tracking, and other functionalities.
- **Portable Gaming Devices:** Handheld consoles and devices designed primarily for gaming but may also include internet connectivity and multimedia functions.
- **Smart Accessories:** Items such as smart glasses, smart rings, and other emerging technologies that can connect to the internet and perform various digital functions.

### 3.2 Future-Proofing the Definition

Recognising the rapid pace of technological advancement, this policy encompasses any future devices that may emerge with similar capabilities. The term "digital device" will apply to any new technology that fits the criteria of storing, processing, or transmitting information, regardless of its form or primary function.

By maintaining a broad and inclusive definition, this policy ensures that all relevant devices are included, providing clarity and consistency for children and young people, parents/carers, partners, and staff. This approach allows the policy to remain relevant and effective as technology evolves.

### 3.3 Digital Device Conduct in PKC schools:

Perth & Kinross Council is committed to fostering a productive and respectful learning environment. To this end, **the following standards for the use of digital devices, including mobile phones, are established for all PKC schools without exception:**

- **Permitted Use:** Mobile phones and other digital devices may only be used, if at all, in accordance with each school's clearly developed policy.
- **Classroom Restrictions:** The use of mobile phones and digital devices is strictly prohibited during lesson time unless explicitly permitted by the teacher for educational purposes.

Each school will be able to manage this in a way that suits their context but as a minimum, devices must be turned off or set to silent mode and stored in a manner that does not disturb the learning environment or the wellbeing of others when children and young people are not permitted to use them by the teacher.

- **Examination Protocol:** Mobile phones and personal digital devices are not allowed in examination rooms. Details are available on the [SQA website](#).
- **Emergency Use:** In case of emergencies, the school office will be the primary means of contact between the school and home. There are clear existing protocols and there is no need for a parent or carer to contact their child or young person on their digital device during the school day.

### 3.4 Digital Responsibility and Safety:

PKC emphasises the importance of digital responsibility and safety to ensure a secure and respectful digital environment for all children and young people and staff. The following guidelines are established to support this objective:

1. **Respectful Use:** All digital device users must adhere to the principles of respect and courtesy. Cyberbullying, harassment, and any form of unsafe and harmful use will not be tolerated and

will be addressed appropriately and in line with Perth & Kinross Anti-Bullying Strategy.

2. **Data Privacy:** Children, young people and staff must respect the privacy of others by not accessing, sharing, or distributing personal information without consent. This includes photos, videos, and any other digital content. We would strongly encourage all parents and carers to model that behaviour.
3. **Safe Online Practices:** PKC encourages the use of safe online practices, including the use of strong passwords, awareness of phishing scams, and the responsible sharing of information. Educational programmes on digital safety will be provided regularly.
4. **Digital Resilience:** We will support children and young people to best manage digital relationships and protect their health and wellbeing.
5. **Reporting Concerns:** Any concerns regarding digital safety or misconduct should be reported immediately to a designated staff member. PKC is committed to addressing and resolving such issues promptly and effectively.
6. **Responsibility for Devices:** Children and young people bringing phones to school are responsible for their care and usage at all times. The school cannot accept responsibility for damage or loss of any device. Appropriate insurance for any digital device brought to school is advised.
7. **Medical Use:** Children and young people who need their mobile phones for medical purposes (e.g. monitoring diabetes) will be permitted to use their devices based on their needs. The school will manage these cases appropriately.
8. **Device Storage:** Schools may implement a secure system for children and young people to store their mobile phones. This can vary depending on the school's approach, with options including storage in classrooms, lockers in corridors, or other designated areas (e.g. Phone Spots).

If a child or young person is found using a mobile phone in violation of the policy, a school **may** ask them to hand the device to a member of staff and store it securely. If this request is refused, parents/carers will be contacted. Schools must manage this carefully. It is essential that the rules around digital device usage and potential consequences are clearly displayed. This should be part of an explicitly agreed consultation-based policy. When the device is handed to a member of staff, legal responsibility for the device would pass to the school, so storage arrangements would need to be carefully set out and adhered to.

9. **Staff Conduct:** Staff mobile phones should be turned off or placed on silent during teaching times.
10. **Parental Communication with Children and Young People:** Parents/carers who need to communicate with their children during class time should do so through the school office. Children and young people are not permitted to contact their parents/carers during class time on a digital device.
11. **Conduct of Children and Young People:** Depending on school policy children and young people may bring mobile phones to school on the understanding that they will not be used during class time without appropriate permission. Recreational use of phones, such as telephoning, texting, messaging, taking photographs or videos, gaming, or accessing social media, is not allowed during class or in any other areas as designated by individual school policy.

12. **School-Specific Policies:** Schools are expected to follow this policy but may also create their own policies appropriate to their context. Schools have the right to state that mobile phones may not be accessed at any time during the school day or indeed brought to school at all. Schools may include in their policy an outline of the consequences for misuse, which aligns with their relationships and behaviour policy. Schools placing restrictions on mobile phone use must give consideration to whether exceptions for individual circumstances are required. For example, exceptions for children and young people:

- who are young carers and who require ongoing contact with family members;
- who have medical conditions that require monitoring using mobile technology;
- who experience concern or anxiety, including whilst away from home on school trips;
- with additional support needs where access to their mobile phone is used as part of a planned approach to managing their learning needs;
- with disabilities who use their mobile phone as part of a reasonable adjustment, including access to augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) etc.

### 3.5 Supporting Digital Safety in PKC

We will support children and young people, staff and parents/carers with suitable advice to stay safe when using digital devices. Recommended resources to support Cyber Resilience and Internet Safety are available in our Safer Schools Scotland App. From August 2025, all schools in PKC will engage with the Safer Schools Scotland App and the resources available to support the Delivery of Cyber Resilience and Internet Safety outcomes across the school and community. By adhering to these standards, PKC aims to create a safe, respectful, and productive digital environment that supports the educational and personal development of all children and young people.

This policy is designed to be clear and accessible for parents/carers, children and young people, and the community, while providing comprehensive support for all PKC schools to establish and support their own policies.

## 4. Legal Aspects

### 4.1 Legal Compliance:

1. There are several online behaviours that could constitute a criminal offence. In responding to any specific behaviours, towards children and young people or staff, it is important for schools and education authorities to have an awareness of the relevant legislative landscape and to seek legal advice where appropriate.
2. Legislation relevant to aspects of online safety, including the safe and responsible use of mobile phones, can be found in appendix C5 of the Scottish version of the online safety policy tool for schools, [360 Degree Safe Scotland](#). The 360 Degree Safe Scotland self-review tool is free to use and is intended to help schools review their online safety policy and practice.
3. School policies on promoting positive relationships and behaviour and anti-bullying are to provide a framework to underpin responses to cases where digital devices have been, or are perceived to have been, used inappropriately. This includes where a device has caused a distraction from learning.
4. School staff cannot access content on a child or young person's digital device without their consent, or the consent of their parent or carer where the child or young person does not have capacity to consent.
5. Policies should make clear that there are consequences for misusing digital devices. Where potentially criminal events have been recorded using mobile technology, this should be drawn to the attention of the police.



6. Taking photographs, videos, or audio recordings of any individual without their permission may be regarded as a breach of that person's rights, and may, in some instances, be regarded as an offence by the police.
7. Should images or recordings be uploaded onto social networks without permission from the data subject, the individual should be asked to remove this. Parents/carers will be asked to support and ensure their child or young person removes the post. Anything that could potentially be regarded as hate crime will be reported to the police.

## **5. Implementation and Review**

### **5.1 Implementation Plan:**

Many schools in Perth and Kinross already have effective local mobile device policies which have been developed in partnership with school communities. These are rooted in the positive ethos of the school and are having a positive impact on the learning experience and wellbeing of children and young people.

All schools should review their current policy and practice to ensure that it is consistent with national and guidance and PKC policy; articulating clearly with the school ethos and existing policy and practice around relationships; learning and teaching and anti-bullying.

When reviewing their current policies or developing a new policy, schools placing restrictions on mobile phone use must give consideration to whether exceptions for individual circumstances are required. For example, exceptions for children or young people:

- who are young carers and who require ongoing contact with family members;
- who have medical conditions that require monitoring using mobile technology;
- who experience concern or anxiety, including whilst away from home on school trips;
- with additional support needs where access to their mobile phone is used as part of a planned approach to managing their learning needs;
- with disabilities who use their mobile phone as part of a reasonable adjustment, including access to augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) etc

All schools should ensure that children; young people and families are receiving stage appropriate information on the negative as well as the positive use of all digital devices. This will be supported by central officers.

### **5.2 Review Process**

A review of the implementation of this policy will be carried out and a report produced for publication by April 2027.

This policy will be reviewed, refreshed and brought back to Learning and Families Committee for further approval by April 2028.

## 6. References

[Mobile phones: guidance for Scotland's schools](#) (Scottish Government Guidance – Published August 2024)

[PKC Relationships Statement and Relationships & Behaviour Policy Guidance for Schools](#)

[PKC Anti-bullying Strategy](#)

[PKC Employee Code of Conduct](#)

[PKC Social Media Guidance](#)

[PKC Digital Strategy 2023-2027 - Our digital ambitions](#)

[Scotland - Safer Schools](#) (Landing Page)

[Scotland App - Safer Schools](#) (APP Launch Page)

[Online Safety Policy for Schools](#) (360 Online Safety for Local Authorities Across the UK)