# HANDHELD DEVICE AND MOBILE PHONE POLICY

Safe and appropriate use of personal and SKAPE devices

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| ORGANISATION | SKAPE North East Ltd | POLICY REFERENCE | P06 |
| UPDATED | 10 November 2026 | NEXT SCHEDULED REVIEW | 10 November 2027 |
| POLICY OWNER | Centre Manager- Linda James (Acting Centre Manager) | RELATED POLICIES | Safeguarding; E-Safety; Behaviour; GDPR |

## 01 INTRODUCTION

At SKAPE, we want students to feel safe, enjoy learning and get the most from their day. This policy explains our expectations for mobile phones and other personal devices, and how we will support students to follow them.

Personal devices include phones, smartwatches, tablets and other smart technology that can send messages or notifications, go online, or take photographs, video or audio recordings. SKAPE devices used for learning and day-to-day work must also follow our safeguarding, data-protection and acceptable-use arrangements.

We recognise that phones can be useful, but their misuse can interrupt learning, affect privacy and contribute to bullying, harassment or other harm. Our approach is to set clear boundaries while taking account of individual needs.

## 02 SCOPE OF POLICY

This policy applies to students, staff, parents/carers, volunteers and visitors during the SKAPE day, including lessons, breaks, lunchtime and movement between activities, and on SKAPE trips and visits. We will also respond to device use outside SKAPE where it affects someone's safety or wellbeing or a member of staff's professional responsibilities.

## 03 AIMS

- To maintain a calm, safe and focused learning environment that is mobile phone-free by default throughout the SKAPE day.
- To safeguard children, young people, staff and visitors from inappropriate recording, online harm, bullying, harassment and misuse of personal information.
- To establish clear and consistent expectations for students, staff, parents/carers and visitors.
- To ensure that any exceptions are considered individually, lawfully and in line with safeguarding, medical needs and reasonable-adjustment duties.

## 04 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Centre Manager: make sure the policy is understood and followed, agree and review individual exceptions, and ensure staff know what they can lawfully do.
- DSL or deputy DSL: respond to safeguarding concerns, guide staff on handling devices or evidence safely, and work with the commissioning school, local authority and other services where needed.
- Staff: set a good example, follow students' agreed support arrangements, apply expectations consistently and report safeguarding or data-protection concerns promptly.
- Students and parents/carers: follow agreed arrangements and contact SKAPE staff if a message needs to be passed on during the day.
- Visitors and other adults: follow staff instructions and the Visitor Information, including the rules on using devices and taking photographs.

## 05 LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE

This policy follows the safeguarding principles in KCSIE 2026 and relevant DfE mobile phone guidance. It also takes account of the Equality Act 2010, UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018, as amended, including by the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025. The relevant guidance is listed at the end.

The DfE mobile phone guidance became statutory for schools on 29 June 2026, with schools expected to follow it from 1 September 2026, following the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026. SKAPE follows its phone-free approach through this policy and our arrangements with commissioning schools and local authorities. The limits on searching devices are explained in section 9.

## 06 STUDENT USE OF PERSONAL DEVICES

SKAPE is a mobile phone-free learning environment by default. Unless an individual exception has been agreed, students must not use or access their phone or other personal communication devices during the SKAPE day, including lessons, breaks, lunchtime and movement between activities.

We encourage students to leave personal devices at home. If a student brings a device for safety on the journey to and from SKAPE, it must be switched off and kept securely out of sight during the day, unless an agreed exception applies.

Students must not use personal devices to photograph, film or make audio recordings on the premises or during SKAPE activities.

If a student needs to contact a parent/carer, staff will help them use the centre telephone or an authorised SKAPE device. Parents/carers should contact SKAPE so that staff can pass on messages or arrange contact.

Where technology is needed for learning, we will normally provide a suitable SKAPE device. Students' personal phones will not ordinarily be used for learning activities.

## 07 EXCEPTIONS AND REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS

We know that students have different needs. Some may need a personal device because of a medical condition, disability, SEND, an agreed reasonable adjustment or another individual circumstance. The Centre Manager/DSL will normally agree any planned exception with the student and parent/carer, involving the commissioning school or a relevant professional where needed. Staff will record what the device is needed for, when it can be used and any steps needed to keep the student safe. The exception applies to the agreed purpose, rather than allowing general use.

Devices needed for medical monitoring, communication support or disability-related alerts must remain available. For example, a phone linked to glucose-monitoring equipment may need to stay switched on, connected and within reach. Staff must follow the student's healthcare or support plan. Essential use must not be stopped while routine approval is being arranged. If an urgent need arises, staff must help straight away and inform the Centre Manager/DSL.

Staff may also need a device for a medical condition, disability or accessibility need. These arrangements will be considered individually. Use should be discreet where possible, without affecting health or safety.

## 08 WHEN EXPECTATIONS ARE NOT FOLLOWED

If a student uses a device outside the agreed arrangements, staff will remind them of the expectation and ask them to switch it off and put it away securely out of sight, or place it in an agreed secure location. Medical and accessibility exceptions must be respected. We will not routinely confiscate students' devices as a punishment.

There may be an immediate safeguarding or safety concern, or a device may hold evidence of a possible crime. In these circumstances, staff may need to keep the device safe temporarily, where lawful, and must contact the DSL/deputy DSL or a senior member of staff as soon as possible. Any action must be reasonable and proportionate. The DSL will involve parents/carers, the commissioning school or local authority, children's services or police as appropriate. Keeping a device safe does not give staff permission to search its contents.

If a device is handed to staff, it must be kept securely. Staff must record why it was taken, the time, who is responsible for it and when and to whom it will be returned or passed on. Staff must not use force simply to obtain a phone. Any restrictive intervention must be lawful, necessary and proportionate and follow the Positive Handling Policy.

If a student repeatedly refuses to follow the policy, staff will use the Behaviour Policy and work with the student, parent/carer and commissioning school or local authority to address the difficulty. We will take account of SEND, medical needs, agreed adjustments and any support the student needs.

Where use of a device raises a safeguarding concern, staff will refer the matter immediately to the DSL/deputy DSL and follow SKAPE's safeguarding procedures.

Persistent disruption despite appropriate support may lead to a placement review under the Behaviour and Exclusion policies, in discussion with the commissioner. Students must not be penalised simply for reporting online harm or using a device for an agreed medical or accessibility need. Support and safeguarding action must continue alongside any behaviour response.

## 09 SEARCHING AND EXAMINATION OF DEVICES

School statutory search powers do not automatically apply to SKAPE staff. Any search of a student, their belongings or information on a device must have a clear lawful basis and appropriate authorisation; a manager's permission alone is not enough. If staff are unsure, they must seek advice from the DSL and, where needed, police. DfE Searching, screening and confiscation guidance will be used where applicable.

Staff must not routinely search the contents of a student's personal device. Where there is concern that a device contains material relevant to a safeguarding matter, criminal offence or risk of harm, the DSL must be informed and the appropriate safeguarding procedures followed. Advice from the police or other relevant agencies will be sought where necessary.

Staff must not ask for passwords or PINs, require a student to unlock a device, or browse messages, images or accounts as a routine behaviour response. A request for help with an online concern must be taken seriously without requiring the student to display or forward harmful material.

## 10 SAFEGUARDING AND ONLINE SAFETY

Staff must report any concern that a student may be at risk of harm immediately to the DSL/deputy DSL and follow the Safeguarding Policy. This includes online bullying, sexual harassment, sharing nude or semi-nude images, exploitation, coercion and exposure to harmful content.

Students will be supported to understand safe and appropriate use of technology, including privacy, passwords/PINs, sharing functions, recording and online behaviour.

Harmful AI-generated or altered images, sexual extortion, discriminatory abuse and unsafe contact through games, social media or messaging must also be taken seriously. We will respond to concerns arising outside SKAPE where they affect a student's safety or welfare. Staff must listen without blame, explain that concerns need to be shared and make a factual record.

If nude or semi-nude imagery involving a child is suspected, staff must not deliberately view it, copy, screenshot, print, save or forward it, ask the student to send it, or delete it or ask the student to delete it. Report immediately to the DSL. If imagery is seen accidentally, stop viewing and report what happened. The DSL will use current UKCIS guidance to assess risk and decide any exceptional viewing, referral, evidence-preservation or removal action. Staff must not investigate the imagery themselves.

SKAPE will follow its Safeguarding Policy alongside the commissioner's relevant policy and agreed reporting arrangements. The commissioning school retains its overarching safeguarding responsibility; SKAPE remains responsible for students in its care. The DSL will liaise promptly with the commissioner's DSL or local authority safeguarding contact, sharing relevant information securely. Urgent protective action or referrals must not wait for the commissioner's response. Parents/carers will be involved where appropriate and safe.

Concerns about staff use of devices must follow the staff allegation or low-level concern arrangements in the Safeguarding Policy, with the Complaints or Whistleblowing Policy used as appropriate. Follow the alternative reporting route if the concern involves the Centre Manager or DSL. Call 999 where there is immediate danger.

## 11 STAFF USE OF PERSONAL DEVICES

Staff personal mobile phones and devices must be switched off or placed on silent and kept away while working with students, subject to agreed medical, accessibility or essential work-related use. Personal use is permitted during designated breaks away from students. Staff must not use devices for personal reasons in front of students during the SKAPE day. Staff must not use personal mobile phones, messaging accounts or other personally-owned devices to contact students or their families in a professional capacity. SKAPE-approved communication methods and SKAPE devices must be used. Personal devices must not be used by staff to photograph, film or record students. Photographs, video or audio required for educational purposes, evidence of learning or learning records must only be captured using SKAPE-owned and authorised equipment and handled in accordance with SKAPE's safeguarding, data-protection and image-consent procedures.

Where staff are required to make calls for SKAPE duties, including off-site activities, emergencies or contact with parents/carers, a SKAPE device should be used wherever reasonably practicable. If an urgent safeguarding or emergency situation requires use of a personal phone, staff should protect their personal contact details where possible and report/record the use appropriately.

Staff must comply with SKAPE's Acceptable Use, Safeguarding, Data Protection and related policies. A breach may result in disciplinary action. Any approved use of a personal device for essential work functions, such as multi-factor authentication, must be limited to that purpose and follow suitable security arrangements. This does not authorise personal photography, private messaging with students or storage of student information in personal accounts. Staff must not link personal social media or messaging accounts with students.

## 12 SKAPE-OWNED DEVICES AND LEARNING RECORDS

SKAPE-owned phones, tablets or other devices may be used for authorised educational, operational and safeguarding purposes.

Images, video or audio of students may only be captured where there is a legitimate authorised purpose and the relevant consent/lawful basis and safeguarding arrangements are in place.

Images and recordings must be transferred, retained and deleted in accordance with SKAPE's data-protection, retention and safeguarding arrangements. They must not be retained unnecessarily on portable devices.

Where SKAPE-owned devices are provided to students for specific learning activities, appropriate supervision, filtering/monitoring and access controls will be used.

The Centre Manager will ensure that responsibilities for filtering, monitoring and responding to alerts are clear, with DSL and technical support as appropriate. Effectiveness will be reviewed at least annually and following significant changes or incidents. Staff must report harmful content, failed controls or alerts promptly under the E-Safety/Online Safety Policy. Personal mobile data, hotspots and VPNs must not be used to bypass SKAPE controls; necessary medical connectivity must be agreed and protected.

Lost devices, misdirected images or messages, and suspected unauthorised access must be reported immediately to the data protection lead and to the DSL where safeguarding is involved. Follow the GDPR Policy's breach procedure.

## 13 VISITORS, VOLUNTEERS AND CONTRACTORS

Visitors, volunteers, contractors and parents/carers must follow the Visitor Policy and Visitor Information. Personal devices must be kept on silent and safely stored in student areas unless staff have authorised use that is necessary for the visit, including agreed accessibility needs. Bluetooth must be disabled unless a necessary exception has been authorised.

They must not photograph, film or record students without explicit authorisation from the Centre Manager/DSL, all required consent or other lawful basis, and compliance with safeguarding and data-protection arrangements. Staff must explain individual restrictions; for some students, photography must never be permitted. Equipment must not be left unattended.

## 14 LOSS, THEFT OR DAMAGE

Personal devices brought onto the premises remain the responsibility of the owner. Subject to any legal responsibilities that cannot be excluded, SKAPE accepts no responsibility for loss, theft or damage to personal devices brought onto the premises.

## 15 HELPING EVERYONE UNDERSTAND THE POLICY

We will explain these expectations to students, parents/carers, staff and visitors so that everyone knows what is expected and why. Staff will be consistent, while taking account of individual needs and agreed adjustments.

Students should feel able to speak to a trusted member of staff about anything that worries them online. Staff will offer communication support where needed and make sure the phone rules do not get in the way of asking for help. Relevant staff will be told about agreed device exceptions without sharing unnecessary private medical information.

## 16 RELATED SKAPE POLICIES

Safeguarding Policy; E-Safety/Online Safety Policy and Acceptable Use arrangements; Behaviour Policy; Exclusion Policy; Positive Handling Policy; Equality and Diversity Policy; No Bullying Policy; Employee Code of Conduct; Confidentiality Policy; GDPR Policy; Visitor Policy and Procedure and Visitor Information; Complaints and Whistleblowing policies; individual healthcare and support arrangements.

## 17 MONITORING AND REVIEW

The Centre Manager and DSL will review this policy each year, or sooner if guidance, risks or SKAPE's arrangements change. They will consider incidents, agreed adjustments and staff feedback to check that the approach is working fairly and consistently. Related policies will be updated together where needed.

## 18 GOVERNMENT GUIDANCE

- DfE Keeping children safe in education 2026, including mobile phone policy, online safety, filtering and monitoring, and staff conduct: www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2
- DfE Mobile phones in schools, updated 29 June 2026: www.gov.uk/government/publications/mobile-phones-in-schools/mobile-phones-in-schools
- DfE Searching, screening and confiscation in schools: www.gov.uk/government/publications/searching-screening-and-confiscation
- UKCIS Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people: www.gov.uk/government/publications/sharing-nudes-and-semi-nudes-advice-for-education-settings-working-with-children-and-young-people
- DfE Meeting digital and technology standards in schools and colleges, including filtering and monitoring: www.gov.uk/guidance/meeting-digital-and-technology-standards-in-schools-and-colleges
- DfE Non-school alternative provision: voluntary national standards, where relevant to safeguarding and commissioning arrangements: www.gov.uk/government/publications/non-school-alternative-provision-voluntary-national-standards

## 19 DOCUMENT REVISION HISTORY

| DATE | CHANGE | APPROVAL | REV. |
|---|---|---|---|
| 31/01/2023 | Initial policy | K. Watson | 01 |
| 31/01/2024 | Policy review and government guidance considered | K. Watson | 02 |
| 20/03/2026 | Policy review | K. Watson | 03 |
| 01/09/2026 | Revised for DfE mobile phone guidance, KCSIE 2026, reasonable adjustments and safeguarding arrangements | K. Watson | 04 |
| 10/11/2026 | SKAPE branding and layout updated; clearer guidance on individual needs, safeguarding, staff and visitor use, and working with commissioners updated. | L. James | 05 |