



2nd February 2026

TANFIELD SCHOOL

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Dear Parents and Carers,

The DfE has recently revised its guidance on the use of mobile phones in schools, with the updated guidance published in January 2026. This guidance now states that all schools should be mobile phone-free environments by default, and any exceptions should be clearly justified and limited. It applies to prohibiting students' access to mobile phones during lessons, the time between lessons, breaktimes and lunchtimes. The guidance is intended to support calm, focused learning environments and is designed to be read alongside other key documents, such as the Behaviour in Schools guidance and Keeping Children Safe in Education.

In addition to this revised guidance, the Education Secretary, Bridget Phillipson, has written to headteachers in England emphasising that schools should be phone-free throughout the entire school day.

Tanfield School's Mobile Phone Policy

At Tanfield School, we already have a clear mobile phone policy that supports our focus on learning, wellbeing and safety:

- Students are permitted to bring mobile phones on site, but these must be switched off and stored away (in bags or blazers) throughout the school day, until the end of the school day.
- Phones may only be used in exceptional circumstances and always under the strict supervision of a member of staff.

Our policy aims to reduce classroom disruptions, minimise distractions, and protect the wellbeing of all students. We recognise that mobile phones can support communication travelling to and from school; however, during the school day, access must be managed to support our learning environment.

How the Latest Guidance Affects Our Approach

1. We will continue to align our policy closely with the new DfE guidance, ensuring students do not access phones throughout the school day unless specific, individual needs apply.
2. Students caught with their phone in sight or turned on will have their phone confiscated and returned to them at the end of the school day.
3. Students who fail to comply with this policy, by using, displaying, or refusing to switch off their mobile phone, may face proportionate sanctions, including a ban on bringing a mobile phone into school.

TANFIELD SCHOOL
HEADTEACHER Steven Clough BSc (Hons) NPQH

Tanfield Lea Road, Stanley, County Durham, DH9 8AY

enquiries@tanfieldschool.co.uk

01207 232 881

@TanfieldSchool @TanfieldSchool
www.tanfieldschool.co.uk

4. If students choose to break this rule a second time, then their phone will only be returned to their parent/carer. Students should appreciate that they have made a choice to cause their parents the inconvenience of attending school to collect the item.
5. Repeated issues regarding a mobile device will result in internal isolation and a lifetime ban from bringing their mobile device into school.
6. In line with the Department for Education's statutory guidance *Searching, Screening and Confiscation: Advice for Schools* (July 2022), staff authorised by the Headteacher have the legal power to search, confiscate, and, where necessary, retain prohibited items.

Communication During the School Day

To ensure student safety, minimise disruption to learning and enable the school to respond appropriately to welfare concerns, parents and carers **must not contact students directly** via mobile phone during the school day. Likewise, students must not call or message parents/carers from their mobile phones while on site, including if they feel unwell, are worried, or believe there is a problem. Direct communication between students and parents during the school day can cause unnecessary anxiety, disrupt lessons, undermine safeguarding procedures, and prevent the school from accurately assessing and responding to situations. All messages to or from students must therefore be done through the main school office or the relevant Year Manager, who will ensure information is passed on promptly and appropriately. Where students need to contact home, this will also be facilitated by the school via these channels.

Any student using a mobile phone to contact parents/carers during the school day is in breach of the school's mobile phone and behaviour rules, regardless of the reason, and an appropriate sanction will be applied in line with the Behaviour Policy.

We are committed to applying our policy fairly and transparently, and we will continue to consider individual circumstances where exceptions may be appropriate. Should your child have such needs, please contact the school office so that we can consider and formally agree on an appropriate approach.

Thank you for your ongoing support. Creating a positive and focused learning environment is a partnership between school and home, and your cooperation in reinforcing our policy's expectations is greatly appreciated.

If you have any questions about the policy or how it is implemented, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely,

Mr C Jones

Deputy Headteacher

