

MOBILE PHONE POLICY 2025/26

This policy should be read in conjunction with the College's Behaviour Policy, Online Safety Policy, Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy, Search & Confiscation Policy. All students must also adhere to the college Acceptable Use Policy.

Purpose

This policy sets out Rochester Independent College's expectations regarding the use of mobile phones and other personal smart devices (including smart watches, tablets and headphones).

In line with the DfE Guidance on Mobile Phones in Schools (February 2026), RIC's approach is clear:

- Mobile phones must not disrupt learning.
- Mobile phones must not compromise safeguarding.
- Mobile phones must not undermine behaviour standards.
- The College retains the right to restrict, confiscate or prohibit use where necessary.

Our approach reflects the different developmental needs of Lower School, Sixth Form and Boarding students, while maintaining a consistent safeguarding and behaviour framework across the College.

Scope

This policy applies:

- During the school day (including before registration and after lessons where students remain onsite)
- During trips and off-site activities
- In boarding houses
- To online behaviour connected to the College
- To all personal smart devices capable of communication, recording, photographing or internet access

Core Principles

Across all year groups:

1. Learning takes priority over device use.
2. Safeguarding is paramount.
3. Respect for others includes digital respect.
4. Recording, photographing or sharing content without permission is strictly prohibited.
5. The College reserves the right to search and confiscate devices in accordance with statutory guidance and the College Search & Confiscation Policy.
6. Sanctions for misuse follow the College Behaviour Policy

LOWER SCHOOL STUDENTS (Years 7-11)

RIC operates a phone-free school day for the Lower School.



1. Yondr Pouch System

As stated in the Lower School Handbook:

- All Lower School students are issued with a lockable Yondr pouch.
- Phones must be switched off and locked in the pouch on arrival.
- Pouches remain locked for the duration of the school day.
- Unlocking stations are available at the end of the day near exits.

2. During the School Day

- Phones must not be accessed during lessons, breaks, or lunchtime.
- Smart watches capable of communication must be treated as phones.
- Headphones are not permitted unless explicitly authorised by a teacher.
- In emergencies, students must use the Lower School office phone.
- The Google chat facility is enabled for use on College devices. The college uses Securly for filtering and monitoring.

3. Exams

- Phones must be turned off and left in bags or handed to staff before entering exam rooms.
- Breaches may constitute exam malpractice.

4. Trips and Off-Site Activities

- Phones are not permitted unless specific permission is given by the teacher in charge.
- Misuse will result in confiscation and possible withdrawal from future trips.

5. Breaches

- First breach: Confiscation; returned at end of day.
- Repeated breach: Parent/carer required to collect device. In the case of a boarding student, parents/carers will be contacted and appropriate arrangements made
- Persistent refusal or serious misuse: Escalation via disciplinary procedure

SIXTH FORM STUDENTS (Years 12-14)

RIC recognises increasing independence at Sixth Form level. However, devices must not disrupt learning.

Mobile phones and other electronic devices should not be used during lessons unless explicit permission has been given by your teacher. Mobile phones should be on silent and away.

1. During Lessons

- Phones must be on silent and out of sight.
- Use is permitted only with explicit teacher permission.
- Headphones are not permitted unless authorised.



2. Study Periods and Common Areas

- Phones may be used responsibly in sixth form common areas and out of sight of Lower School students.
- In Study Rooms, use must not disrupt others.
- Recording or photographing without consent is prohibited.
- Phones must not be used in areas.
- The Google chat facility is enabled for use on College and BYO devices on the College WiFi. The college uses Securly for filtering and monitoring.

3. Exams

- Phones must be turned off and left in bags or handed to staff before entering exam rooms.
- Breaches may constitute exam malpractice.

4. Misuse

Misuse includes:

- Persistent lesson disruption
- Refusal to follow staff instructions
- Online harassment or cyberbullying
- Filming or sharing content without consent
- Academic dishonesty
- Circumventing College filtering system

Sanctions follow the Behaviour Policy staged procedure.

BOARDING STUDENTS

Boarders have greater access to phones outside the school day, but safeguarding remains paramount.

The Boarding Student Handbook confirms responsible Wi-Fi use expectations and the Behaviour Policy Boarding Addendum allows the College to hold devices overnight where necessary

1. During the School Day

Boarders follow the same rules as day students (Lower School/Sixth Form). Should a boarder need to contact family during the school day due to time differences, they will be able to access their mobile phones in the Lower School office during lunch time.

2. Evenings and Weekends

- Phones may be used in communal areas.
- Use must not disturb others (e.g. late-night noise).
- Inappropriate online behaviour will be treated as a safeguarding concern.



3. Overnight Device Holding

The College may hold a student's mobile phone or electrical devices overnight where deemed in the student's best interests.

This may occur:

- For safeguarding reasons
- Due to sleep disruption
- Following misuse
- As part of a behaviour contract

Safeguarding and Online Conduct

The College's Behaviour Policy makes clear that behaviour expectations apply online as well as in person.

The following are strictly prohibited:

- Taking or sharing indecent images
- Filming staff or students without permission
- Cyberbullying
- Sharing confidential information
- Accessing extremist or illegal content
- Circumventing filtering systems

All serious concerns will be referred to the Safeguarding Team in line with the College's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Confiscation and Search

Where a device is suspected of containing:

- Prohibited material
- Evidence of bullying
- Evidence of criminal activity

The College may search and/or retain the device in line with statutory powers and the Search & Confiscation Policy.

Serious breaches may lead to:

- Behaviour contracts
- Suspension
- Permanent exclusion

Reasonable Adjustments

Students with SEND or specific medical needs may require:

- Access to medical monitoring apps
- Adjusted arrangements agreed in advance

Adjustments will be reasonable, proportionate and must not disrupt learning



Communication with Parents

Parents/carers:

- Must not contact students directly during lessons.
- Should contact Student Services or the relevant School Office in emergencies.
- Will be informed of repeated breaches or serious concerns.

Partnership with parents/carers is central to behaviour expectations

STAFF

Staff should not use their own mobile phone for personal reasons in front of students throughout the school day. It is recognised however that there may be occasions where it is appropriate for a teacher to use a mobile phone or similar device, for instance to issue homework, issue rewards and sanctions or use multi-factor authentication.

Implementation and Review

This policy:

- Is informed by DfE Behaviour in Schools guidance and 2026 mobile phone expectations.
- Operates within the College Behaviour Policy framework.
- Will be reviewed annually or earlier if required by updated DfE guidance.

Summary of Expectations

School	School Day	Lessons	Consequence for Misuse
Lower School (Yrs 7-11)	Locked in Yondr Pouch	No access	Confiscation, Parent Collection + Behaviour Procedure
Sixth Form (Yrs 12-14)	In designated communal areas only.	Silent and away - unless specific teacher permission is given	Confiscation + Behaviour Procedure
Boarding	As above	As above	Holding overnight

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