



10th July 2026

RE: Mobile Phone Policy Changes – September 2026

Dear Parents and Carers

At Sturminster Newton High School our aim is that every member of our school community enjoys learning, achieves success, and is empowered to be a positive member of the community. As part of our commitment to ensure the very best learning environment for your child, we are updating our policy on how mobile phones and smart devices are used throughout the school day.

The impact of smartphones and social media on children and young people's learning, wellbeing and mental health is something we all take seriously and is now the subject of increasing national attention. Over the past year there has been significant discussion about children's access to smartphones and social media, alongside growing evidence highlighting the effects that excessive phone use can have on concentration, sleep, mental wellbeing and face-to-face relationships.

The Government has made it clear that schools should have robust policies that prevent the use of mobile phones during the school day so that pupils can focus on learning. From September 2026, schools are required to have regard to new statutory guidance on mobile phone use, which states that "all schools should be mobile phone-free environments by default". Our current 'off and away' policy provides some of this environment, but we are aware it is not robust enough to meet these new statutory duties.

As a result, Sturminster Newton High School has reviewed its arrangements and will be taking steps to strengthen its approach to mobile phones from September 2026. This will help ensure we fulfil our statutory responsibilities whilst continuing to provide the best possible environment for learning, wellbeing and positive social interaction.

Our revised mobile phone policy has been designed to support learning, safeguard students and promote positive digital wellbeing. Rather than relying solely on consequences, we want to educate and support young people in developing lifelong habits that allow them to use technology responsibly.

To help address these complex issues, we have explored a number of solutions. We are excited to announce that we will be launching a new mobile phone initiative with **Blackout**, a digital wellbeing and phone management tool designed specifically for education settings and will be using Blackout as a key part of our new approach and policy in the Autumn term.

What is going to change, and when?

Our aim is not to remove technology from young people's lives, but to ensure that during the school day students are able to focus on learning, build positive relationships and develop healthy habits around technology use. By reducing unnecessary distractions during school hours, we believe we can further improve concentration, wellbeing and engagement while continuing to prepare students to use technology responsibly outside school.





After the Summer holidays, beginning with students in Year 7, parents/carers will be offered three options around bringing a mobile phone to Sturminster Newton High School:

- A smart phone with the Blackout app installed
- No phone brought to school at all
- A non-smart 'brick' phone

Following our implementation and roll out to the new Year 7 students, we will then communicate the next steps for students in Years 8-11. We anticipate that Year 8-11 will implement the Blackout app and new procedures by January 2027.

What is Blackout?

Blackout is a mobile app that helps students manage and limit their phone use during the school day. It blocks access to distracting apps during school hours, such as social media, games and web browsers, while keeping essential communication (calls and SMS) available. Blackout also disables cameras and recording features.

The app will only be active during the school day and is set to only be active during school hours and during school days/term time – so it will turn on at 8:30 and turn off at 3pm. It does not have access to files, information, location details, personal information or any content through your child's phone nor are any school records shared with Blackout. The only information provided will be your child's name, school email address, year group and type of device, which are used for verification purposes.

The Blackout app is not invasive, and no data or content will be visible to the school or app provider. It is a tool, aligned with our existing mobile phone policy that phones should not be used during the school day. Whilst we still expect all students to adhere to this approach, the Blackout app provides a structured support mechanism to reduce temptation and distractions during the school day.

We believe that working with Blackout is a proactive step in helping students remain focused on their learning, while supporting their well-being, relationships and academic progress. It will support our curriculum, by helping to educate students about healthy use of digital technology.

We believe that the app is very reasonably priced when compared to other similar, physical phone blocking resources (such as pouches or lockers). We are happy to report that due to support and funding from charitable causes, we are able to offer the app completely free of charge.





How can parents support the transition?

In the near future, will invite you to a parent and carer webinar, where members of the Blackout team will explain the initiative in more detail, answer any questions and provide a short demonstration of how the app works. We understand that many families may not be able to attend, so this session will be recorded and shared afterwards.

The new Year 7 parents have already had the Blackout information shared at our recent Information Evening and will be 'on boarded' in September.

For students in Years 8-11, we would ask families to discuss Blackout so that students can be prepared for when their Year Group has this change implemented. We will be in further contact in September to confirm the implementation dates for Years 8-11 and ensure that a series of tutor activities and assemblies share this information with our students.

We would also be grateful if you could take a few minutes to complete a short survey. Your feedback will help shape the next steps of our digital strategy.

[Parent Mobile Phone Survey](#) [Young People's Mobile Phone Use and Blackout App – Fill in form](#)

Finally, please see the new Mobile Phone and Digital Wellbeing section of the school website for further information. [Mobile Phones & Digital Wellbeing - Sturminster Newton High School](#)

Thank you for your continued support in helping our young develop healthier digital habits and the balance, focus, and confidence they need to thrive both in school and beyond.

Yours faithfully

Mr M Motteram

Headteacher

