

11-May-26

Mobile Devices at Thomas Gainborough School from September 2026

Dear Families,

I am writing to you in order to outline our approach to mobile phones at Thomas Gainsborough School from September 2026. The topic of internet use via smartphones and exposure to the internet, especially social media by young people has become an increasingly hot topic in the recent months, with a growing view that more should be done to safeguard and educate young people both in schools and wider society.

The Government has recently updated its [guidance](#) for schools around mobile phones, stating “All schools should be mobile phone-free environments by default; anything other than this should be by exception only.” A large number of schools in England have already adopted this approach in various ways, including some of our partner schools within Unity Schools Partnership. Those schools that have implemented this approach from September 2025 have noted that students attend school more frequently, are less distracted in lessons and feel safer, reporting less incidences of bullying online or negative interactions with social media due to not having access to their device during the school day.

At TGS, our current stance allows students to use their mobile devices outside of lessons. This approach is clearly at odds with the Government expectation and is therefore something we have carefully considered moving forward before implementing any change. From September TGS will operate a policy where students do not have access to their devices during the school day. The primary reasons why we believe that taking the decision to remove devices from students during the school day is the best option are:

1. **Mental Health and Wellbeing** - Excessive phone use is linked to increased anxiety, poor sleep, and reduced self-esteem—especially among adolescents. Removing phones during the school day encourages healthier habits, face-to-face social interaction, and a break from the pressures of online life.
2. **Improved Academic Performance** - Research consistently shows that removing mobile phones from the school environment leads to measurable improvements in student outcomes. A study by the London School of Economics found that schools that banned phones saw a significant increase in test scores, particularly among lower-achieving students. The distraction caused by phones disproportionately affects those who are already struggling, widening the attainment gap.
3. **Enhanced Focus and Reduced Disruption** - Mobile phones are a major source of distraction in classrooms. Notifications, social media, and messaging apps interrupt concentration and reduce the quality of learning. A phone-free environment helps students stay present, engage more deeply with lessons, and develop stronger attention spans.
4. **Safeguarding and Online Safety** - Phones can be used to access inappropriate content, engage in cyberbullying, or record and share images without consent. Banning phones during the school day reduces these risks and supports a safer, more respectful school culture.
5. **Equity and Inclusion** - A consistent trust-wide policy ensures fairness and reduces peer pressure related to phone ownership or the latest technology. It also supports families who may not be able to afford smartphones, helping to create a more inclusive environment.

From September 2026, all students in Year 7-11 will be required to place their mobile devices (including phones, headphones, smartwatches and gaming devices) into lockable, signal blocking pouches. This policy does not mean that students cannot bring a device to school, simply that if they do, it must be locked in the secure pouch provided. The pouches will remain with the student throughout the school day and will be unlocked as students leave the school site. Mr Lewis and I have visited schools who have adopted a similar approach and believe that it is the right approach for us at TGS.

Pouches will be given to all students on the first day of the 2026-27 academic year for free, there is no initial cost to families. Students are expected to bring their pouch each day for the purpose of storing their mobile devices in. If a student forgets their pouch, they will be expected to hand their device in to student services where it will be stored securely for them. Students who lose or damage their pouch will be expected to purchase a replacement.



In order for the strategy to be impactful for students compliance by all is key. To promote positive behaviours relating to mobile phones in school any student who has broken the policy can expect to receive a sanction as per the mobile phone procedures and behaviour policy adopted by the school.

The process for students securing their phones into the pouch is simple, secure and effective. Students place their device into their pouch upon arrival at school, secure it and leave it in their bag for the duration of the day, and then simply unlock at the end of the day on their way home. The whole process of locking and unlocking takes seconds and will support your child in being able to focus on learning during the day without the distractions that devices bring.



INSERT

Insert your phone into the pouch



LOCK

Simply press the pin into the hole to lock closed



UNLOCK

Unlock by simply placing the locking mechanism near the magnetic base

Our approach for students in the Sixth Form will be different, and students who require access to a device for medical needs i.e. tracking blood sugar levels will continue to be able to do so.

Full details of the changes can be found via the school website [here](#), and via the attached frequently asked questions, which can also be found on the school website. A video outlining our approach will be available shortly on the website. If you have any further questions that are not answered by the FAQ document, please do contact me via enquiries@tgschool.net

Our mobile phone procedure document, alongside the policy of Unity Schools Partnership can be found [here](#).

Further information on supporting your child develop good habits around mobile phone use can be found via the [NSPCC](#), [Barnardos](#) and [BBC Bitesize](#).

Thank you in advance for your support of this key change within the school.

Yours sincerely,



Simon Hibbert
Deputy Headteacher

