

SAFEGUARDING & CHILD PROTECTION UPDATE



ISSUE: 17

Sept 2026



Welcome to the start of the new academic year! We hope you had an enjoyable summer break and some well-deserved rest. This Safeguarding and Child Protection Update provides essential information to keep your knowledge current and relevant to the schools or settings we place you in, including an overview of recent changes to the Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) guidance. Please ensure you read this update and familiarise yourself with statutory guidance updates.

Key reminders this term

- Complete your annual safeguarding training if due.
- Complete the new sexual harassment training when released – you will receive an email with access in the new term.
- Complete allergy awareness training before attending schools.
- Submit any external safeguarding and/or allergy training certificates to us so that we can update your file.

IMPORTANT: Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026

The Department for Education (DfE) has updated its statutory safeguarding guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE), which comes into force on **1 September 2026**.

The updated guidance contains important information about recognising and responding to safeguarding concerns. Below, we have summarised the changes most relevant to you while working on supply.

You must read Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026: Part One **in full**.

This summary supports, **but does not replace**, your reading of the full Part One statutory guidance document.

A full list of changes can be found in Annex C of the wider statutory document, on pages 189–195 of the full KCSIE 2026 guidance.

IMPORTANT: Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 continued...

Recognising when a child may need support:

KCSIE 2026 expands the examples of children who may benefit from support before statutory intervention. These now include children who:

- are pregnant or are parents themselves;
- show early signs of abusive, violent or harmful behaviour;
- have been repeatedly removed from lessons or suspended;
- attend on a part-time timetable; or
- are at risk of permanent exclusion or attend alternative provision.

These circumstances do not necessarily mean that abuse is taking place. However, they may indicate increased vulnerability or that a child and their family need additional support.

Modern slavery is also now specifically included among the forms of harm staff should recognise.



Family Help and early support:

KCSIE 2026 introduces updated terminology for support provided before statutory intervention. It distinguishes between:

- universal services and community-based Early Help; and
- the targeted early help level of Family Help.

A child and their family may receive help through education, health, family hubs, youth services or other community services. Where more coordinated or targeted support is required, this may be provided through Family Help.

You are not expected to decide which level of support a child needs. Your responsibility is to recognise and report concerns so that the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) can consider the appropriate response.

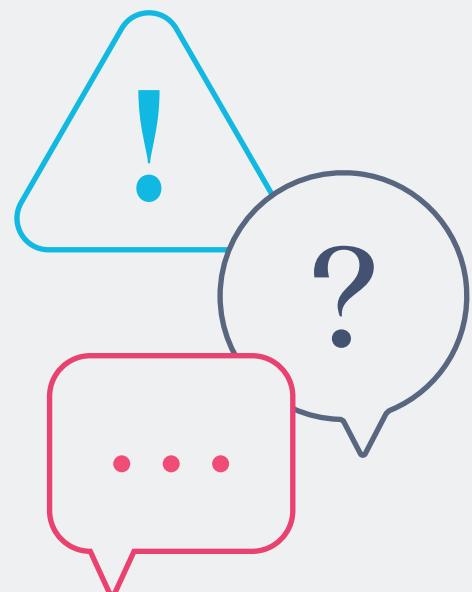
Safeguarding concerns can overlap

The guidance reinforces that abuse, neglect, exploitation and other safeguarding concerns rarely occur in isolation. Children may be exposed to several connected risks at the same time, both online and offline and inside or outside their home.

Extra-familial harm can include:

- sexual harassment and exploitation;
- abuse and stalking within teenage relationships;
- criminal and financial exploitation;
- serious youth violence;
- county lines; and
- radicalisation.

Remain professionally curious, look beyond the behaviour you can see and report any concerns to the DSL or a deputy.





Emotional and sexual abuse

The definition of emotional abuse has been clarified. It may include persistent criticism, belittling, name-calling, deliberately silencing a child or making fun of what they say or how they communicate.

The guidance also recognises that children may cause harm to parents, carers or other family members, sometimes referred to as child-to-parent or caregiver abuse.

KCSIE now provides clearer examples of sexual abuse. It may involve contact or non-contact activity and can be committed by adults or other children. Most sexual abuse is committed by someone previously known to the victim.

Take all disclosures and concerns seriously. Listen carefully, do not ask leading questions or attempt to investigate, and report the concern immediately.

Child-on-child abuse

This section is now titled “Child-on-child abuse, including harassment and violence”.

KCSIE 2026 emphasises that child-on-child abuse:

- is preventable;
- may involve serious physical harm or threats involving weapons;
- can be a safeguarding concern for both the victim and the child displaying harmful behaviour; and
- may be more likely at particular times, including immediately after school.

Harmful sexual behaviour can range from developmentally inappropriate or abusive sexualised behaviour through to sexual harassment and sexual violence.

Child-on-child abuse may also include racist, misogynistic, misandrist or other discriminatory and derogatory behaviour, as well as physical violence and conflict.

Never dismiss harmful behaviour as “banter”, “part of growing up” or something children should resolve themselves. Challenge inappropriate behaviour and report concerns in accordance with the school’s procedures.

Criminal and sexual exploitation

Children who are being exploited may believe they are part of a group, gang or genuine relationship. Exploitation may be committed or facilitated by an individual, gang or organised network.

Children may not recognise that they are being abused and may be criminalised for actions carried out while being controlled or coerced. Criminal exploitation may also constitute modern slavery.

A child cannot consent to being exploited, abused or trafficked. Victims are not always recognised and can be criminalised for actions they take whilst under coercion. Staff should look beyond the immediate behaviour and consider what may be causing or influencing it.





Mental health and safeguarding

KCSIE 2026 provides more information about when mental health difficulties may become a safeguarding concern or indicate that a child is experiencing abuse, neglect or exploitation.

Potential warning signs include:

- significant changes in behaviour;
- ongoing difficulty sleeping;
- withdrawing from social situations;
- losing interest in things the child usually enjoys; and
- physical signs of self-harm or self-neglect.

You should not attempt to diagnose a mental health condition. If you have a concern, follow the school's child protection procedure and speak to the DSL or a deputy.

If a child appears to be in immediate danger, call 999 or follow the setting's emergency procedure.

Serious violence and weapons

The updated guidance places a stronger emphasis on preventing serious violence.

Any concern about a child carrying or using a weapon - or expressing an intention to do so - must be reported to the DSL or a deputy.

Children with disrupted education, including suspensions, permanent exclusions or time in alternative provision, and those with a history of offending may face an increased risk. Staff should also be alert to times when risk may be higher, such as immediately after school.



Nudes and semi-nudes, including AI-generated images

KCSIE now consistently uses the term "making or sharing nudes or semi-nudes". This includes photographs, videos and livestreams that have been:

- taken by a child or another person;
- digitally altered; or
- generated using artificial intelligence, including deepfakes.

Every incident involving nudes or semi-nudes requires a safeguarding response, whether the sharing appears consensual or non-consensual.

Do not view, copy, print, forward or investigate an image yourself. Report the concern immediately in accordance with the school's safeguarding procedure.

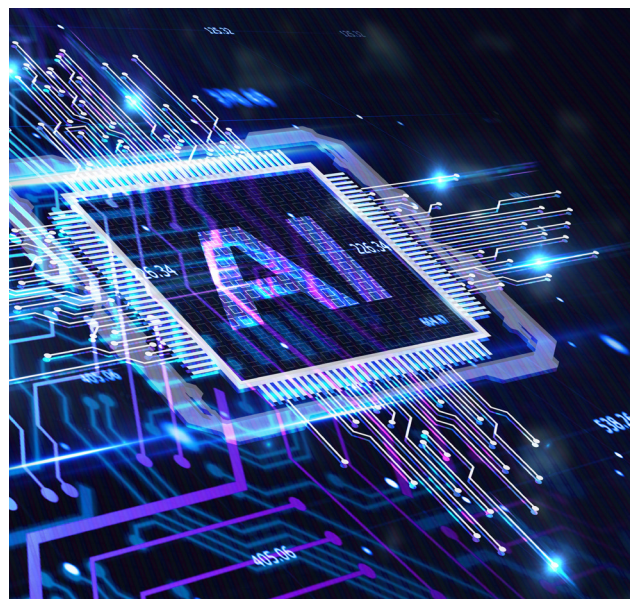


AI, mobile phones and online safety

The guidance includes further information on the safe use of generative AI in education and refers to schools having clear policies on mobile-phone use. You can find more information on mobile-phone use later in this bulletin.

When working on supply:

- follow the school's policy on mobile phones, devices and generative AI;
- only use school-authorised platforms and accounts;
- do not enter personal, confidential or safeguarding information into public AI tools;
- maintain professional boundaries when communicating online; and
- report online safety concerns to the DSL.



Cybercrime

Children with an interest in computing may become involved in activity that crosses into cybercrime, sometimes without fully understanding that it is illegal.

Warning signs may include unauthorised access to accounts or computer systems, creating or

using malicious software, or deliberately disrupting digital services.

Do not attempt to investigate suspected cyber activity. Record what you have observed and report it to the DSL in line with the school's procedures.

Sharing safeguarding information

Data protection law does not prevent information being shared for the purpose of keeping children safe.

Safeguarding information should only be shared with those who need it and through the school's approved procedures. Do not discuss concerns with colleagues who are not involved or use personal email accounts, devices or messaging applications to communicate confidential information.

Do not delay reporting because you are uncertain whether information can be shared. If in doubt, speak to the DSL or a deputy.



Children who may face additional barriers

KCSIE provides further information about the safeguarding needs of young carers, children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and children with medical conditions.

These children may face additional barriers to recognising or reporting abuse. Changes in behaviour, mood, attendance or presentation should not automatically be attributed to a child's disability, health condition or additional needs.

Listen carefully, consider the child's individual communication needs and report any concerns to the DSL.

Supporting children and preventing bullying

KCSIE contains updated guidance about children who are lesbian, gay or bisexual and children who are questioning their gender.

Staff should remain professionally curious about the full range of a child's experiences, including their family and peer relationships, mental health needs and any discriminatory bullying.

Do not make individual decisions or agree changes relating to a child's social transition. Follow the school's policy and any arrangements agreed by the school with the child and their parents or carers. Report bullying, safeguarding concerns or concerns about a child's wellbeing to the DSL.

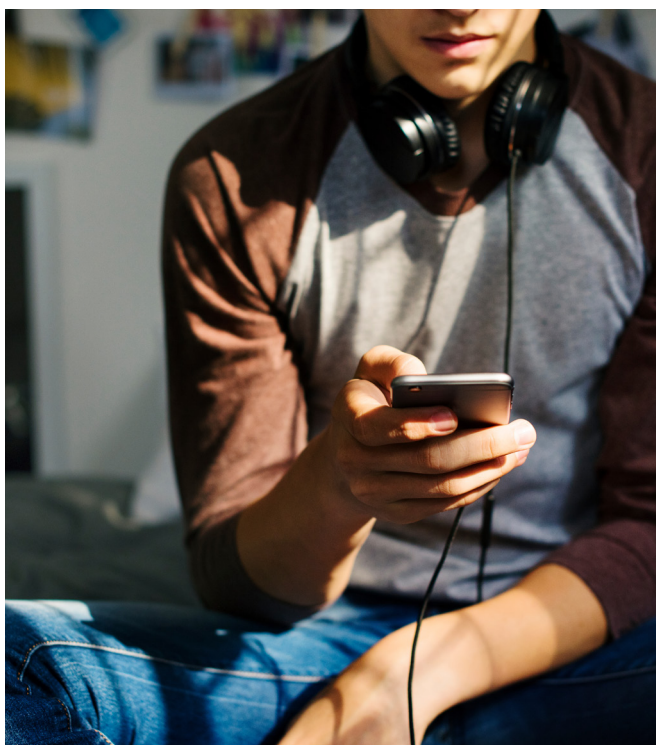


Early Years Foundation Stage

If you work with children aged 0–5 in a school-based nursery or reception class, KCSIE should be read alongside section 3 of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework.

The EYFS contains additional safeguarding and welfare requirements for early years provision. Make sure you understand the setting's procedures and any requirements specific to the age and needs of the children in your care.

See the later section of this bulletin for an overview of the 2026 EYFS changes.



Alternative, boarding and residential provision

Children attending alternative provision may have complex needs or experience increased vulnerability. If you work in alternative provision, make sure you understand:

- the safeguarding and reporting arrangements at the site;
- who holds DSL responsibility;
- any relevant risk assessment or support plan; and
- how attendance and unexplained absence should be reported.

KCSIE also contains updated safeguarding information for boarding schools, residential special schools and residential colleges. If you work in one of these settings, complete the setting-specific induction and make sure you understand the additional procedures applying outside the normal school day.

Operation Encompass

Through Operation Encompass, a school may receive a police notification where there are reasonable grounds to believe that a child may be a victim of domestic abuse. This can include children connected to the household even where they were not present during the incident.

This information is confidential and must only be shared on a need-to-know basis. Follow any guidance provided by the DSL and report relevant changes in the child's presentation, behaviour or wellbeing.

Operation Encompass does not replace the usual safeguarding process. Any separate concern about a child must still be reported.



Concerns about adults working in school

Concerns that someone has harmed a child, may have harmed a child or may pose a risk of harm to children must be reported to the headteacher or principal in accordance with the school's policy. They will consider whether the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) should be contacted.

If the concern relates to the headteacher or principal, follow the alternative reporting route set out in the school's policy. Concerns that do not appear to meet the harm threshold should be reported through the school's low-level concerns procedure. Do not investigate the matter yourself.

Your responsibility

Before starting work in any school or college, make sure you know:

- the identity of the DSL and any deputies;
- how to record and report a concern;
- what to do if the DSL is unavailable; and
- the school's child protection, behaviour and staff conduct requirements.

If you are concerned about a child, act immediately. Do not assume someone else will report it. Make a clear and accurate record and, if you are unsure, always speak to the DSL or a deputy.



Allergy training and Benedict's Law

In July 2026, the Department for Education published new guidance on Allergy Safety in Schools, which is statutory for many of our settings. The guidance introduces strengthened requirements to better protect children and young people with allergies. The guidance strengthens arrangements for managing allergies in schools. It covers allergy policies, staff training, recognition of allergic reactions, emergency procedures, Individual Healthcare Plans and learning from serious incidents and near misses. You can find the statutory guidance for schools here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/allergy-safety-in-schools>

Benedict's Law

The new requirements are widely known as Benedict's Law, in memory of Benedict Blythe, a five-year-old pupil who died from anaphylaxis after suffering an allergic reaction at school in December 2021. Following his death, Benedict's family established the Benedict Blythe Foundation. The changes come into effect following the campaign led by the family of Benedict and aim to improve a nationally consistent approach to allergy awareness from September 2026, to improve protection for children and young people with allergies. Read more about Benedict's story here: <https://theallergyteam.com/benedicts-story/>



The key points for supply staff:

- All staff, including supply staff, will complete allergy awareness training.
- Supply staff must familiarise themselves with the school's allergy safety policy and emergency procedures at the start of each placement.
- Supply staff should know how to recognise the signs and symptoms of an allergic reaction and understand the emergency response procedures.
- Where relevant, staff should be aware of pupils with Individual Healthcare Plans (IHPs) and follow the arrangements set out by the school.
- When arriving at a placement, always ask whether there are any pupils with allergies in your class and ensure you know the correct procedures.
- Find out where pupils' prescribed emergency medication and any school-held spare adrenaline auto-injectors are kept, and who is authorised and trained to use them.

- Schools must record and learn from serious incidents and near misses to continually improve allergy safety.
- Common allergies and allergic conditions include food allergy, hay fever and some skin allergies. Allergic reactions may also be triggered by medicines and insect stings, and allergies can trigger asthma symptoms in some people.

In line with the new statutory guidance, schools within its scope must ensure that all staff receive allergy awareness training. As part of our wider safeguarding requirements, **all agency staff must complete mandatory allergy awareness training before attending.**

Vision for Education: <https://www.candidatego.com/take/yc3SycNa>

Smart Teachers: <https://www.candidatego.com/take/8NWa3SQK>

Staff bullying



The Department for Education has published new guidance, Preventing and Tackling the Bullying and Harassment of School Staff, to support schools in creating safe, respectful and inclusive working environments for all staff. The guidance outlines schools' responsibilities for preventing, addressing and responding to bullying and harassment of staff and promotes a culture where all staff feel safe, valued and supported. The guidance recognises that bullying and harassment may be carried out by pupils, parents or carers, colleagues or members of the community, and may occur in person or online.

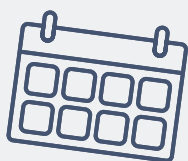
You can find the guidance for schools [here](#).

The key points for supply staff:

- All staff, including supply staff, should be treated with the same dignity and respect.
- Supply staff should know how to report concerns and access appropriate support if they experience bullying or harassment.
- Bullying and harassment can take place both in person and online. Any incident of online bullying should also be reported to the school.
- Schools will be expected to take appropriate action to investigate concerns, support affected staff and take steps to prevent further incidents.

Practical tips for supply staff – what you need to know:

- If you experience or witness bullying or harassment, report it immediately to the appropriate lead, following the school's reporting procedures.
- Ensure you make a factual written record of what happened.
- As supply staff, you can also contact your consultant at your agency if you need advice or support following an incident.



Anti-Bullying Week 2026 takes place from the 16th to 20th of November and provides an opportunity to reinforce a culture of kindness, respect and zero tolerance of bullying towards both pupils and staff. You can find more information and how to get involved here: <https://anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/anti-bullying-week-2026>

The duty to prevent sexual harassment

Creating a safe, respectful workplace remains a priority for all employers. From 30th October 2026, the legal duty on employers to prevent sexual harassment will be strengthened. Employers will be required to take all reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace, raising the standard from the current duty to take reasonable steps.

The changes also strengthen protections where harassment is carried out by third parties, such as clients, customers, contractors, parents or visitors. Employers are expected to take proactive measures to identify and reduce risks, provide appropriate

training, encourage the reporting of concerns, and respond promptly and effectively where issues arise.

While these legal duties apply to employers, everyone has a role to play in creating a professional, respectful and inclusive working environment. As a member of our supply team, you are expected to uphold high standards of conduct, complete mandatory training, report inappropriate behaviour, and help foster a culture where concerns can be raised confidently and addressed appropriately.

The duty to prevent sexual harassment continued...

Staff are expected to:

- Treat colleagues, students, parents and visitors with dignity and respect.
 - Refrain from any unwanted conduct of a sexual nature.
 - Avoid behaviour that could create an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive working environment.
 - Never engage in behaviours such as:
 - sexual jokes;
 - inappropriate comments;
 - unwanted touching;
 - sexual advances;
 - sharing sexually explicit material; or
 - spreading sexual rumours.
 - Follow the standards set out in our policies, including the [Staff Code of Conduct](#) and [Sexual Harassment Policy](#).
 - Complete all required training on workplace conduct and harassment prevention, including e-learning, which will be available later this year.
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- Report any incidents of sexual harassment that you experience or witness in accordance with the procedures of the school or setting and/or the agency.
 - Cooperate fully with any investigation into allegations or complaints of harassment.

Everyone has the right to work in an environment that is safe, respectful and free from harassment. By working together, we can help ensure that every school and setting provides a positive experience for staff, learners and visitors alike.

EYFS Framework updates

The Department for Education (DfE) has published an updated Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework, which comes into force on 1st September 2026.

The updated framework strengthens safeguarding requirements across the early years sector. While many of the changes place new duties on providers and employers, there are also important updates for anyone working directly with young children.

This overview highlights the changes most relevant to our supply staff working in nurseries, pre-schools and school-based early years settings. The framework also includes additional requirements for providers, managers and domestic childcare settings (such as childminders), which are not covered in detail below.





Safer sleep guidance strengthened

The safer sleep section has been significantly expanded and now provides much clearer expectations for supporting babies and children under two years of age to sleep safely.

If you work with babies or children under two, you should always follow the setting's safer sleep policy and procedures.

Some of the key guidance requirements are as follows:

- placing children on their backs in their own separate sleep space on a clear, flat and firm surface;
- keeping sleep spaces free from toys, pillows, cot bumpers, loose bedding and other unnecessary items;
- ensuring babies under six months sleep in the same room as an adult; and
- keeping all sleeping children within sight and hearing and checking them frequently.

Please review the updated requirements in full here:

<https://help-for-early-years-providers.education.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/safer-sleep>

Every adult caring for babies and children plays an important role in reducing risk. Raise any concerns if you believe safer sleep practices are not being followed.

New expectations for children's screen use

For the first time, the EYFS requires providers to have regard to the Department for Education's guidance on screen use in early years settings.

The guidance advises:

- Children under two: avoid screen time altogether other than in exceptional circumstances such as a video call with parents and carers.
- Children aged two to five: screen time should be limited to 1 hour a day, less if possible.
- If you are supervising children or delivering activities, always follow the setting's approach to using digital devices and ensure any screen use is appropriate, purposeful and age-appropriate.

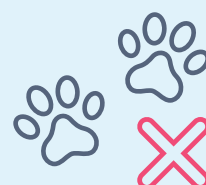


These time limits do not apply to screen-based assistive technology where it is needed to support a child with SEND.

You can also find more information regarding screen use in settings here: <https://help-for-early-years-providers.education.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/screen-use>

Banned dog breeds

Registered childcare must not be provided on premises where a banned dog breed is kept or present. Report any concern immediately to the setting's management.



EYFS Framework updates continued...

Safeguarding remains everyone's responsibility

The framework states that safeguarding responsibilities apply to every person looking after children, reinforcing that protecting children is not limited to qualified practitioners.

As a supply worker, you should continue to:

- remain alert to signs of abuse, neglect and welfare concerns;
- follow the safeguarding procedures of every setting you work in;
- report concerns immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or appropriate manager; and
- follow our agency's safeguarding reporting procedures where required.



Safeguarding training

The safeguarding training section has been updated to reference the Department for Education's Early Years Safeguarding Training Package.

As always, ensure your safeguarding knowledge remains up to date and complete any training requested by the setting or by the agency.

DfE has developed online safeguarding training in collaboration with the NSPCC. The training is free for all early years educators. [Log in to the early years safeguarding training](#). If you do not have an account, [use the registration form](#) to sign up.

Recruitment and suitability requirements

The updated framework strengthens a number of safer recruitment requirements for providers, including enhanced DBS checking, recruitment references and pre-employment screening.

From 1st September 2026, early years providers must obtain enhanced DBS checks for volunteers, including supervised volunteers.

One important change for all staff is that individuals are now expected to disclose arrests and criminal charges, as well as convictions, cautions and other relevant outcomes, where required as part of recruitment and ongoing suitability processes.

What this means for you

If your personal circumstances change after joining our agency, for example, if you are arrested, charged with an offence or become subject to police or court proceedings, you must notify us immediately. Early disclosure allows us to assess any safeguarding implications and provide appropriate support while ensuring we continue to meet our safeguarding obligations.



EYFS Framework updates continued...

Paediatric first aid on outings

The framework also clarifies that providers must ensure appropriate paediatric first aid cover is available during outings, not just within the setting itself.

If you accompany children on trips or visits, make sure you understand the setting's emergency procedures and know who the qualified paediatric first aider is.

Wider changes within the 2026 EYFS framework

The September 2026 framework also includes a number of wider updates aimed primarily at providers, managers and, in some cases, domestic childcare settings. These include changes to recruitment processes, references, staff-to-child ratio clarification, Ofsted notification requirements for domestic premises and disqualification provisions.

These responsibilities sit with registered providers rather than individual supply workers, but form part of the wider safeguarding improvements introduced through the updated EYFS framework.



Key takeaways

The 2026 EYFS updates reinforce the importance of safe, child-centred practice across all early years settings.

As a supply worker, you can help keep children safe by:

- following each setting's safeguarding, health and safety and safer sleep procedures;
- using screens appropriately and in line with the setting's policy;
- reporting safeguarding or welfare concerns immediately;
- informing us promptly of any change that may affect your suitability to work with children; and
- keeping your safeguarding training and knowledge up to date.

Thank you for continuing to provide safe, professional and high-quality support to children in early years settings.

Mobile phones in schools

In our most recent issue of this e-bulletin, we shared an update regarding the Department for Education's Mobile phones in schools guidance. Please be advised that the guidance since became statutory on 29th June 2026, and schools will be following it as of 1st September 2026.

You can find a copy of the guidance for schools here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mobile-phones-in-schools/mobile-phones-in-schools>

The key points for supply staff are as follows:

- All schools should be mobile phone-free environments by default; anything other than this should be by exception only.
- Supply staff must seek information regarding the individual policy of the school to understand how to implement it in line with the requirements of the setting.
- Staff should not use their own mobile phone for personal reasons in front of pupils throughout the school day.

Training

It's important to keep your training record with us up to date. If you have completed any recent safeguarding or child protection training or allergy training via schools, voluntary roles or other agencies, please email copies of your certificates to your agency:

- visionadminbox@visionforeducation.co.uk
- smartadminbox@smartteachers.co.uk

Data protection and privacy



Protecting your data is important to us. Find out more about how we comply with legislation in the Privacy section on our websites.

- www.visionforeducation.co.uk/privacy-policy
- www.smartteachers.co.uk/privacy-policy

Please note that some of the resources detailed in this bulletin are from third-party providers which are not part of Edwin (Vision for Education/Smart Teachers) and should be used at your own discretion.