6th November 2026

Dear Families,

A New Device-Free Approach to School Events

At the Skylark Federation, we want our school events to be safe, enjoyable and memorable for everyone. Whether it is a Nativity performance, sports day, celebration event or leavers' production, these occasions are an important part of school life and we are delighted to welcome families to share them with us.

As you will be aware, we have recently introduced a smartphone-free approach across our schools. This reflects our commitment to safeguarding, children's wellbeing and creating environments where pupils and adults can be fully present and engaged. As part of this approach, we are introducing a new device-free audience policy for all school events.

What does this mean?

With immediate effect, parents, carers and visitors will not be permitted to use mobile phones, cameras, tablets, smartwatches or other recording devices to take photographs, make video recordings or record audio during school events. We ask all audience members to keep devices out of sight throughout the event.

This applies to:

- Performances and productions
- Sports days
- Assemblies
- Celebration events
- Concerts
- Leavers' events
- Open events involving pupils
- Any other school activity attended by families or visitors

We appreciate that many families have traditionally taken photographs at school events and that this change may be disappointing for some. We have not taken this decision lightly. However, after careful consideration, we believe this approach provides the clearest and most consistent way to safeguard children, protect privacy and create a distraction-free environment in which all children can participate and all families can enjoy the occasion.

Why are we making this change?

This decision has been made to support the Federation's commitment to safeguarding, online safety and privacy. In recent years, national safeguarding advice, online safety organisations and schools have increasingly highlighted the risks associated with the capture, storage and sharing of images of children. Once photographs or videos have been taken, schools have little control over how they are shared, stored or redistributed. Advances in technology and social media have significantly increased how easily images can be copied, manipulated, altered, or shared beyond their original audience. Emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI), present additional challenges which schools are increasingly being advised to consider as part of their safeguarding responsibilities.

Alongside these emerging risks, we have a responsibility to protect the privacy and safety of all children, including those with restrictions on photography or image sharing. We also want children to participate and perform with confidence, without feeling they are being recorded by large numbers of devices, and we want families to enjoy these special occasions together rather than through a screen.

This approach aligns with the federation's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, Online Safety and Acceptable Use Policy, Parent/Carer Behaviour Policy and our responsibilities regarding the appropriate use of children's images. A growing number of schools are now adopting device-free audience approaches as part of wider safeguarding and online safety measures, particularly in response to developments in social media, image sharing and artificial intelligence (AI). This change reflects that evolving landscape and our commitment to proactively protecting children and their privacy.

In particular, this approach helps us to:

- Protect the privacy and safety of all children, including those who may have restrictions on photography or image sharing.
- Reduce the risk of images being shared beyond their intended audience.
- Minimise the potential for images to be copied, altered or reused without consent.
- Enable children to participate and perform without feeling that they are being recorded by multiple devices.
- Encourage families to enjoy and engage with events in the moment.
- Ensure our expectations for visitors are consistent with our wider smartphone-free approach.

Will I still be able to take a photograph of my child?

Yes. We understand that families want to capture special moments and celebrate their children's achievements. Therefore, at each event, we will provide a designated time and location where parents and carers can take photographs of their own child.

This may be before or after the event, depending on the circumstances. We believe this offers a sensible balance between allowing families to keep treasured memories whilst ensuring that events themselves remain device-free.

What about photographs taken by the school?

Where appropriate, school staff may take photographs in accordance with parental consent preferences, safeguarding procedures and data protection requirements. These may be shared through our usual approved school communication channels.

What happens if someone does not follow the policy?

All visitors are expected to follow school policies and the reasonable instructions of staff. If a visitor is seen using a phone, camera or recording device during an event, they will be reminded of the policy and asked to stop immediately. They may also be asked to delete any photographs or recordings taken during the event. If they refuse to comply with a reasonable request from staff, they will be asked to leave. Serious or repeated breaches may be considered a breach of the Federation's Parent/Carer Behaviour Policy and may result in restrictions being placed on attendance at future school events.

We recognise that views on this issue may differ and appreciate that some families may prefer previous arrangements. However, after carefully reviewing our approach, we believe a clear and consistent device-free audience policy is the most effective way to balance safeguarding, privacy, inclusion, and the wellbeing of all children.

Thank you for your understanding and continued support.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Dean
Interim Executive Headteacher
Skylark Federation