MOBILE PHONE POLICY

2026/2027

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Introduction

At Unified Academy we recognise that mobile phones and similar devices, including smartphones, are an important part of everyday life for our students, parents/carers and staff, as well as the wider school community.
Our policy aims to:

- Promote safe and responsible phone use
- Set clear guidelines for the use of mobile phones for students, staff, parents/carers, visitors and volunteers

This policy also aims to address some of the challenges posed by mobile phones in school, such as:

- Risks to child protection
- Data protection issues
- Potential for lesson disruption
- Risk of theft, loss, or damage
- Appropriate use of technology in the classroom

Note: throughout this policy, 'mobile phones' refers to mobile phones and similar devices.

Relevant guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the Department for Education's non-statutory mobile phone guidance and behaviour guidance. Further guidance that should be considered alongside this policy is Keeping Children Safe in Education.

Roles and responsibilities

- All staff (including teachers, support staff and supply staff) are responsible for consistently enforcing this policy.
- Volunteers, or anyone else otherwise engaged by the school, must alert a member of staff if they witness, or are aware of, a breach of this policy.
- The Principal is responsible for monitoring the policy annually, reviewing it, and holding staff and students accountable for its implementation.
- Staff will address any questions or concerns from parents/carers quickly, and clearly communicate the reasons for prohibiting the use of mobile phones.

Use of mobile phones by staff

The DfE's non-statutory mobile phone guidance says that staff should not use their own mobile phone for personal reasons in front of students throughout the school day.
Personal mobile phones

Staff (including volunteers, contractors and anyone else otherwise engaged by the school) are not permitted to use their personal mobile phone, while during contact time. Use of personal mobile phones must be restricted to non-contact time, and to areas of the school where students are not present (such as the staffroom).

There may be circumstances in which it's appropriate for a member of staff to have use of their phone during contact time for personal reasons. For instance (this list is non-exhaustive):

- For emergency contact by their child, or their child's school
- In the case of acutely ill dependents or family members

The Principal will decide on a case-by-basis whether to allow for special arrangements.
If special arrangements are not deemed necessary, school staff can use the school office

number [01737 215488] as a point of emergency contact.

Data protection
Staff must not use their personal mobile phones to process personal data, or any other confidential school information, including entering such data into generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools such as chatbots (e.g. ChatGPT and Google Bard).

Safeguarding
Staff must not give their personal contact details to parents/carers or students, including connecting through social media and messaging apps.
Staff must avoid publicising their contact details on any social media platform or website, to avoid unwanted contact by parents/carers or students.
Staff must not use their personal mobile phones to take photographs or recordings of students, their work, or anything else which could identify a student. If it's necessary to take photos or recordings as part of a lesson/school trip/activity, this must be done using school equipment.

Using personal mobiles for work purposes
In some circumstances, it may be appropriate for staff to use personal mobile phones for work. Such circumstances may include, but aren't limited to:

- To use multi-factor authentication
- Emergency evacuations
- Supervising off-site trips
- Supervising residential visits

In these circumstances, staff will:

- Use their mobile phones in an appropriate and professional manner, in line with our staff code of conduct
- Not use their phones to take photographs or recordings of students, their work, or anything else which could identify a student
- Refrain from using their phones to contact parents/carers. If necessary, contact must be made via the school office

Work phones
Some members of staff are provided with a mobile phone by the school for work purposes. Only authorised staff are permitted to use school phones, and access to the phone must not be provided to anyone without authorisation.
Staff must:

- Only use phone functions for work purposes, including making/receiving calls, sending/receiving emails or other communications, or using the internet
- Ensure that communication or conduct linked to the device is appropriate and professional at all times, in line with our staff code of conduct.

Sanctions
Staff that fail to adhere to this policy may face disciplinary action. See OHCATs disciplinary policy for more information.

Use of mobile phones by students

The DfE's non-statutory mobile phone guidance says that students should not use mobile phones throughout the school day.

At Unified Academy we also recognise that mobile phones are part of everyday life for many students and that they can play an important role in helping students to feel safe and secure when travelling to and from school. However, we also recognise that they can prove a distraction in school and can provide a means of bullying or intimidating others. Therefore:

1. Mobile phones should not be brought to school by students. They should be left at home or with parents where possible.
2. This school recognises the importance for some students of having a mobile phone on their journey to and from school. In order to create a phone-free environment during the school day, every mobile phone must be handed to school staff and kept in lockers provided in reception that they do not access until collection at the end of the day.

School trips

Consideration will be given to the use of mobile phones by students on residential trips or trips outside the normal school day on a case-by-case basis, with the intention of preventing any disruption of a students' educational experience. While being mindful of other elements of the school's policy, it may be possible for students to use their mobile phones to make useful photographic records of activities, in which case this will be explicitly confirmed by trip staff.

Adjustments and exemptions

Under the school's duty to make reasonable adjustments for specific students, we will consider flexibility on restrictions. This includes, for example, under the Equality Act 2010 to avoid substantial disadvantage to a disabled student, where a mobile phone is necessary to allow students to manage a medical condition effectively, or if a student is a young carer.

Sanctions

If a student is found to be in breach of this policy interventions will be applied in line with the Unified Academy's behaviour policy, up to and including fixed term suspension.

Staff have the power to search student's phones as set out in the Department for Education's (DfE's) guidance on searching, screening and confiscation. Under the direction of the Principal, staff can search a student's phone if they have reason to believe the phone contains pornographic images, or if it is being/has been used to commit an offence or cause personal injury. All searches must be authorised by the Principal or the Designated Safeguarding Lead (as a delegated power).
Certain types of conduct, bullying or harassment can be classified as criminal conduct. Unified Academy takes such conduct extremely seriously and will involve the police or other agencies as appropriate. Such conduct includes but is not limited to:

- Sexting (consensual and non-consensual sharing nude or semi-nude images or videos)
- Upskirting
- Threats of violence or assault
- Abusive calls, emails, social media posts or texts directed at someone on the basis of someone's ethnicity, religious beliefs or sexual orientation

Use of Mobile Phones by Parents, Volunteers and Visitors

Parents, volunteers and visitors (including Governors and contractors) must adhere to this policy as it relates to staff if they are on the school site during the school day and this means:

- Not taking pictures or recordings of students, unless it is a public event (such as a school fair), or of their own child.
- Using any photographs or recordings for personal use only and not posting on social media without consent.
- Not using phones in lessons or when working with students.
- Parents, volunteers and visitors will be informed of the rules for mobile phone use when they sign in at Reception or attend a public event at school.

Parents and carers or volunteers supervising school trips or residential visits must not:

- Use their phone to contact other parents.
- Take photos or recordings of students, their work, or anything else which could identify a student.

Parents and carers or volunteers supervising trips are also responsible for enforcing the school's policy for students using their phones as set out in the section above.

Parents and carers must use the school office as the first point of contact if they need to get in touch with their child during the school day.

Loss, Damage or Theft

Unified Academy accepts no responsibility for mobile phones or devices that lost, damaged or stolen on school premises, on transport during school visits or trips, or while students are travelling to and from school.

Monitoring and review

Unified Academy is committed to ensuring that this policy has a positive impact of students' education, behaviour and welfare. When reviewing the policy, we will take into account:

- Feedback from parents/carers and students
- Feedback from staff
- Records of behaviour and safeguarding incidents
- Relevant advice from the Department for Education, the local authority and any other relevant organisations