



Use of mobile phones by students in schools

Policy Statement, July 2025

Approved by the trust board on 15th July 2025

Unity Schools Partnership is committed to fostering an environment that prioritises learning, wellbeing, and safety. Headteachers and trust leaders are agreed that we would like students at schools across the trust to experience a true break from their phones during the school day. We want to give them the chance to connect with their learning, socialise with their friends and enjoy the opportunity to be fully present. Our principles for change are outlined below:

- We believe that childhood is fleeting and precious
- We believe in letting children be children
- We believe technology should be a force for good
- We believe parents should be empowered to parent in the online world
- We believe change starts with all of us

Background

As part of the Department for Education (DfE) guidance ([Mobile phones in schools - February 2024](#)) on making schools a mobile phone free zone and building on experience throughout our schools across the Trust, this policy sets out approaches for schools implementing a mobile phone free environment. It takes into account pupil age groups, legitimate reasons why pupils bring phones to school, and sets out policy for headteachers, along with appropriate exemption processes and why they may be required.

As part of its guidance, the DfE lays out a number of options for implementing a mobile free environment. Unity Schools Partnership will be requiring pupils to hand mobile phone handed in on arrival – a school may decide that its pupils may require



access to their mobile phones before and after school, but pupils will not have access to their mobile phones throughout the school day. At the start of the school day each pupil will hand in their device to school staff and collect at the end of the school day. Schools will be mindful that even if a pupil has handed in one mobile phone, they may have another mobile phone in their possession.

Scope of our Policy

This policy applies to:

- all students in all schools within the trust and all phases
- all areas of the school premises, including classrooms, corridors, playgrounds, and toilets.
- all times during the school day, including break and lunch times.

Rationale

The decision to ban mobile phones throughout the school day is based on a growing body of evidence highlighting the negative impact of smartphones on student learning, wellbeing, and school culture. Key reasons include:

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.

Expectations

Each school as per their local arrangements will specify how phones are handed in and stored, but the expectation is that mobile phones are handed in at the start of the school day and returned at the end of the school day and that students must not use or display mobile phones at any time during the school day.

Exceptions

Travelling to school

We understand the importance many parents see for their children to have access to their phones whilst they travel to and from school. The disconnect from smartphones will be implemented during the school day. This will mean that students hand their phones over to be looked after during lessons and social time before they are returned at the end of the day.

Medical reasons for needing a phone

A small number of students require access to their phones all day. These students, for example with diabetes, will be allowed access to their phones as they need. Where there is a particular need, parents will be welcomed to discuss this with the school and appropriate arrangements such as restricting use to medical apps will be put in place.

Emergency situations



In an emergency schools will follow their local procedures. Parents can communicate any urgent messages with their child during the school day via the school office.

Specific School Activities

Where a specific school activity requires a change in policy this will be communicated with parents, e.g school trips

Enforcement

Unity Schools Partnership supports its schools and leaders to ensure that pupils have respite from their mobile phones during the day to develop their learning and support our underlying principles.

Searching

Unity Schools Partnership reserves the right to carry out searches for mobile phones if they suspect children are accessing them outside of the expected boundaries. Headteachers have a statutory power to search or authorise a search of a pupil and may utilise a magnetic wand to assist.

Education

Unity Schools Partnership believe in delivering an educational approach to this policy, these educational elements will be covered through tutor time sessions, PSHE lessons and assemblies. Support for parents/carers covering these educational elements will be provided via regular communication by schools.

Loss, theft or damage

Students bringing phones to school must ensure that phones are appropriately labelled with the student's name. Students must secure their phones as much as possible, including using passwords or pin codes to protect access to the phone's functions. When handing phones over each morning, they will be expected to be turned off.

Unity Schools Partnerships accepts no responsibility for mobile phones that are lost, damaged or stolen on school premises or transport, during school visits or trips, or



while pupils are travelling to and from school. To inform all students, parents and carers of the above, our schools will;

- put signs up in the school entryway or office
- provide a copy of their policy and disclaimer to new students and parents/carers
- confiscated phones will be stored in a designated area and a locked safe
- lost phones will be returned to a safe and secure place in the school. The school will then attempt to contact the owner

Compliance

All students are expected to comply with this policy. Failure to follow the school protocols will be considered as per the school's behaviour policy.

Communication

Ongoing communication of this policy is essential. Unity Schools Partnership and its schools will continue to share information in an educational manner with students, parents/carers, and staff. This may take the form of, but is not limited to student handbooks, homeschool agreements, induction materials, assemblies, newsletters, school websites and visiting speakers.

Links to Other Policies

- Acceptable Use of ICT
- Behaviour Policy – all local policies will need updating
- PSHE Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- SEND Policy
- Home School Agreements
- Each school is responsible for its own Mobile Phone Procedures Annex to work in combination with this policy

Monitoring and Review

The policy will be reviewed annually by the trust's Safeguarding Committee.

Contributions to this review will be collated from:

- termly reviews at Local Governing Bodies



- feedback from students, staff, and parents
- adjustments made based on effectiveness and emerging technologies.