MOBILE PHONE POLICY

Status: Advisory

Member of Staff Responsible: CEO / Executive Principal

Related Policies:

- Behaviour Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Implementation date: May 2026

Reviewed date:

Next review date: May 2028*

Introduction and aims

Aims

At the UTC we recognise that mobile phones, including smart phones, are an important part of everyday life for our students, parents/carers and staff, as well as the wider UTC community.

Our policy aims to:

- Promote, and set an example, for safe and responsible phone use
- Set clear guidelines for the use of mobile phones for students, staff, parents/carers and volunteers
- Support the UTC's other policies including the Safeguarding Policy and Behaviour Policy

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

- Risks to student protection
- Data protection issues
- Potential for lesson disruption
- Risk of theft, loss, or damage

Rationale

Aside from the safeguarding issue, the rationale for this policy is that it has been shown that the effect of banning mobile phones from UTC premises adds up to the equivalent of an extra week's schooling over a student's academic year. This is according to research by Louis Philippe Beland and Richard Murphy, published by the Centre for Economic Performance at the London School of Economics.

"Communication: The Impact of Mobile Phones on Student Performance" found that after schools banned mobile phones, the test scores of students aged 16 improved by 6.4%. The economists cite that this is the "equivalent of adding five days to the School year". According to Beland and Murphy, a phone ban produced improvements in test scores among students, with the lowest-achieving students gaining twice as much as average students. The ban had a greater positive impact on students with special education needs and those eligible for free school meals, while having no discernible effect on high achievers. "We found that not only did student achievement improve, but also that low-achieving and low income students gained the most. We found the impact of banning phones for these students was equivalent to an additional hour a week in school, or to increasing the school year by five days."

Roles and responsibilities

Staff

All staff (including teachers, support staff, and supply staff) are responsible for enforcing this policy.

Volunteers, or anyone else otherwise engaged by the UTC, must alert a member of staff if they witness, or are aware of, a breach of this policy.

The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) are responsible for monitoring the policy every 2 years, reviewing it, and holding staff and students accountable for its implementation.

Use of mobile phones by students

Pre 16 Student Use (Y9, Y10 and Y11)

The UTC recognises that parents/carers in the community feel the need for their children to have access to a mobile phone for communicating home. This helps with safeguarding and student protection especially in the long dark winter months. The UTC supports this approach wholeheartedly. To that end, the UTC has adopted the following mobile phone best use policy:

- Students are allowed to bring mobile phones to and from the UTC to ensure their personal safety at all times;
- Students must not use a mobile device, smart watch connected to a mobile phone, including headphones anywhere in the UTC during the UTC day during the school day, except under the specific direction of a teacher.
- For the purposes of this policy, the UTC day begins at 8.25am and ends once the students have been dismissed from their final lesson or enrichment. Mobile phones will not be permitted to be used at any time during UTC extra-curricular clubs.
- If a student brings their phone to the UTC, then on arrival it MUST be switched off and MUST be kept out of sight in a bag or locker. It should not be seen or heard (including vibrate) throughout the UTC day;
- The phone can be switched back on at the end of the school day upon leaving period 5 or period 6 (depending upon the day of the week) and not before and not during any period of social time (break or lunch);
- Any student found using or known to have used their phone during the UTC day will have the phone confiscated and returned at the end of the UTC day. Students can collect their phone from reception at the end of the UTC day. Parents/carers will be informed via Learning Managers. Students will be asked to sign for their phone;
- If the student is a repeat offender, the UTC will request a parent/carer to come in and collect the phone from the UTC;
- Any refusal to hand a phone over to members of staff will result in a follow-up sanction in line with the UTC's Behaviour Policy. This would constitute the refusal of a reasonable request by a member of staff.
- The only exception to the above is for those students who need their phone for an approved medical purpose e.g. Diabetes monitoring
- If smart watches or other devices interrupt learning then they will be dealt with under the behaviour policy and will be treated along similar lines to mobile phones.
- There may be some occasions ie. Using 2 factor authentication that students will be allowed the use of their telephone under the strict guidance of staff.

Post 16 Students

Post 16 students are allowed access to their mobile phones during the UTC day but they are NOT allowed to use them in lessons, to reflect their increased independence and responsibility and they must not compromise our policy on the use of mobile phones for other students.

- There may be some occasions ie. Using 2 factor authentication that students will be allowed the use of their telephone under the strict guidance of staff.

Therefore, they are strictly not allowed to use them in corridors/on stairs. Misuse of mobile phones by students in post 16 will lead to appropriate sanctions as SLT feel appropriate.

Designated areas:

The Senior Leadership Team reserves the right to allow phones in selected areas given individual circumstances. In this instance, the authorising member of staff will appropriately supervise.

Contacting Students and Parents/Carers

Parents/carers wishing to contact their child during the UTC day should call the UTC. We have a well-established and efficient system for getting messages to students and pastoral support if it is needed.

Students who need to contact parents/carers in an emergency should speak to their Learning Manager who will make a phone available.

Sanctions

If a phone is seen by a member of staff it will be confiscated by them. UTCs are permitted to confiscate phones from the student under sections 91 and 94 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

Once confiscated, this will be placed in Reception where the student will be allowed to sign for and collect it at the end of the day.

If a student has their mobile phone repeatedly confiscated, we will request a parent or carer collects it from main reception after the UTC day.

If we 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, staff have the power to search student's phones, as set out in the DfE's guidance on searching, screening and confiscation. This will always be done by a member of the SLT or pastoral team.

Certain types of conduct, bullying or harassment can be classified as criminal conduct. The UTC takes such conduct extremely seriously and will involve the police or other agencies as appropriate.

Such conduct includes, but is not limited to:

- Sexting
- 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 staff

Personal mobile phones

Staff (including volunteers, contractors and anyone else otherwise involved/employed by the UTC) are not permitted to make or receive personal calls, or send texts, while students

are present. Use of personal mobile phones must be restricted to non-contact time, and to areas of the UTC where students are not present (such as departmental offices and the staff room).

There may be circumstances in which it is appropriate for a member of staff to have use of their phone during contact time. For instance:

- For emergency contact by their child, or their child's school
- In the case of acutely ill dependents or family members
- If designated staff need to access ClassCharts for example on their phone
- For use of 2 factor authentication

The Principal will decide on a case-by-basis whether to allow for special arrangements.

Safeguarding

Staff must refrain from giving 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.

Similar details and guidance can be found in the staff handbook and the IT Use Policy.

Staff must not use their mobile phones to take photographs or recordings of students, their work, or anything else which could identify a student. If it is necessary to take photos or recordings as part of a lesson/UTC trip/activity, this must be done using UTC 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 are not limited to:

- Emergency evacuations
- Supervising off-site trips
- Supervising residential visits
- 2 factor authentication
- For certain staff the use of ClassCharts

In these circumstances, staff will:

- Use their mobile phones in an appropriate and professional manner, in line with our Code of Conduct
- Not use their phones to take photographs or recordings of students, their work, or anything else which could identify a student.

Work phones

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

Staff must:

- 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 the UTC's staff disciplinary policy for more information.

Use of mobile phones by parents/carers, volunteers and visitors

Parents/carers, visitors and volunteers (including governors and contractors) must adhere to this policy as it relates to staff if they are on the UTC site during the UTC day.

This means:

- Not taking pictures or recordings of students, unless it is a public event, 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/carers, visitors and volunteers will be informed of the rules for mobile phone use when they sign in at reception or attend a public event at UTC.

Parents/carers or volunteers supervising trips are also responsible for enforcing the UTC's policy for students using their phones, as set out in section 4 above.

Parents/carers must use either reception or their child's Learning Manager as the first point of contact if they need to get in touch with their student during the UTC day. They must not try to contact their student on their personal mobile during the UTC day.

Loss, theft or damage

Students bringing phones to UTC must ensure that phones are stored securely and out of sight when not in use.

Students must secure their phones as much as possible, including using passwords or pin codes to protect access to the phone's functions. Staff must also secure their personal phones, as well as any work phone provided to them. Failure by staff to do so could result in GDPR breaches.

Where a mobile phone is brought into UTC, it is entirely at the student's and parents/carers' own risk. The UTC accepts no responsibility for the loss, theft or damage of any phone or electronic device brought into UTC. (Ref: Section 94, Education and Inspections Act 2006 states that "where a teacher disciplines a pupil by confiscating an item, neither the teacher nor the UTC will be liable for any loss or damage to that item').

Equally, there is no statutory liability on UTCs for items that go missing in other ways.

Confiscated phones will be stored in Reception in a secure location and must be signed out by the student or parent/carer upon return.

Lost phones should be returned to Reception. The UTC will then attempt to contact the owner.

Monitoring and review

The UTC is committed to ensuring that this policy has a positive impact on student's education, behaviour and welfare. When reviewing the policy, the UTC will take into account relevant advice from the Department for Education, the local authority or other relevant organisations.

***This policy will be reviewed every two years.**

Appendix 1

Acceptable use agreement for mobile phones

You must obey the following rules if you bring your mobile phone to the UTC:

- You may not use your mobile phone during lessons.
- Phones must be switched off (not just put on 'silent') and must kept out of sight or in a locker or in the bottom of a bag.
- You may not use your mobile phone in the toilets or changing rooms. This is to protect the privacy and welfare of other students.
- You cannot take photos or recordings (either video or audio)
- Avoid sharing your contact details with people you don't know, and don't share other people's contact details without their consent.
- Don't share your phone's password(s) or access code(s) with anyone else.
- Don't use your mobile phone to bully, intimidate or harass anyone. This includes bullying, harassing or intimidating staff or students via email, text/messaging, apps or social media.
- Don't use your phone to send or receive anything that may be criminal. For instance, by 'sexting'.
- Rules on bullying, harassment and intimidation apply to how you use your mobile phone even when you aren't in the UTC.
- Don't use vulgar, obscene or derogatory language while on the phone or when using social media. This language is not permitted under the UTC's behaviour policy.
- Don't use your phone to view or share pornography or other harmful content.
- You must comply with a request by a member of staff to switch off, or hand over, a phone. Refusal to comply is a breach of the UTC's behaviour policy and will be dealt with accordingly.
- Mobile phones and smart watches are not permitted in any internal or external exam or test environment. If you have a mobile phone, you will be asked to store it appropriately, or turn it over to an exam invigilator, before entering the test room. Bringing a phone or smart watch into the test room can result in your exam being declared invalid.