

Manchester Communication Academy

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Mobile Phone Policy 26/27



with you, for you, about you.

Revision Information

This document has been approved for operation within	Manchester Communication Academy
Date of last review	July 2026; the changes made then are currently subject to governors' approval
Date of next review	July 2027
Review period	Annually, or sooner where legislation, statutory guidance or operational requirements change
Date of approval	
Person responsible for the policy	Susan Watmough - Headteacher
Owner	Local Governing Body (MCA) / Interim Standards Committee

Review date changes made	By Whom
July 2025 – Policy produced	S Watmough
July 2026 Comprehensive review in line with DfE <i>Mobile phones in schools</i> and <i>Searching, screening and confiscation</i> guidance. Introduced the secure mobile phone pouch system, clarified expectations for students, staff and parents, and strengthened arrangements for safeguarding, compliance, sanctions and reasonable adjustments.	S. Watmough

Equality Statement:

Under the public sector equality duty (PSED), all schools/academies must have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010. To advance equality of opportunity between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it and to foster good relations across all protected characteristics. This means schools/academies must take into account equality considerations when policies are being developed, adopted and implemented. Manchester Communication Academy (part of Greater Manchester Academies Trust) regularly reviews all policies and procedures, which are recommended to schools/academies to ensure compliance with education and employment legislation including the Equality Act 2010.

1. Purpose

Manchester Communication Academy is committed to providing a calm, purposeful and disruption-free learning environment where every student is able to achieve their full potential.

Research and national guidance demonstrate that unrestricted access to mobile phones can negatively impact concentration, behaviour, attendance, wellbeing and safeguarding. Mobile phones also increase opportunities for cyberbullying, inappropriate photography or filming, academic dishonesty and online conflict that can continue throughout the school day.

In line with Department for Education guidance, Manchester Communication Academy operates as a **mobile phone free school** throughout the school day.

To support this, every student is issued with a secure lockable mobile phone pouch. Students retain possession of their phone during the day; however, the device remains securely locked and inaccessible until the end of the school day unless authorised by a member of staff.

This policy aims to:

- promote excellent behaviour and attitudes to learning;
- maximise learning time by removing unnecessary distractions;
- strengthen safeguarding arrangements by reducing opportunities for misuse of mobile technology;
- promote positive relationships by reducing online conflict during the school day;
- encourage face-to-face interaction between students;
- provide consistency in expectations across the Academy;
- support students in developing healthy and responsible digital habits; and
- create an environment where learning, wellbeing and personal development remain the priority.

This policy forms part of the Academy's wider commitment to ensuring students are **Safe, Happy, Healthy and Loved** whilst maintaining the highest expectations of behaviour, responsibility and respect.

2. Legal Framework

This policy has been developed with regard to:

- Department for Education guidance *Mobile Phones in Schools*;
- *Keeping Children Safe in Education* (current edition);
- *Searching, Screening and Confiscation* (DfE);
- Education Act 1996;
- Education and Inspections Act 2006;
- The Equality Act 2010;
- UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR);
- Human Rights Act 1998.

This policy should also be read alongside:

- MCA Behaviour Policy
- MCA Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- MCA Playbook

3. Scope

This policy applies to:

- all students attending Manchester Communication Academy;
- all mobile phones and communication devices capable of making calls, sending or receiving messages, accessing the internet, recording audio or video, taking photographs or connecting to social media;
- smart watches with communication, internet or recording capability;
- wireless earbuds where connected to mobile devices;
- all areas of the Academy site;
- educational visits, enrichment activities and off-site provision organised by the Academy unless alternative arrangements are communicated beforehand.

The policy applies from the moment a student enters the Academy site until they leave at the end of the school day.

4. Principles

Manchester Communication Academy believes that students learn best in environments that are calm, purposeful and free from unnecessary distraction.

The Academy does not prohibit students from bringing mobile phones to school. However, where students choose to bring a phone, they must comply fully with this policy.

Students remain responsible for the care and security of their own mobile phone whilst it is stored within the Academy-issued secure lockable pouch.

The Academy reserves the right to search, confiscate and securely store mobile phones or other electronic devices where there are reasonable grounds to believe that Academy rules have been breached or where safeguarding concerns exist. Searches will always be conducted in accordance with current legislation and Department for Education guidance.

Parents and carers are asked not to contact students directly during the school day. Should an emergency arise, communication should be made through the Academy Reception, where appropriate arrangements will be made promptly.

5. Definitions

For the purposes of this policy:

Mobile phone refers to any handheld electronic device capable of making or receiving telephone calls, text messages, emails or accessing the internet.

Communication device includes smart watches, tablets, wireless communication devices and any other device capable of messaging, recording, photographing or accessing online services.

Secure Lockable Phone Pouch refers to the Academy-issued pouch used to securely store a student's mobile phone throughout the school day. The pouch remains in the possession of the student but cannot be opened without an authorised unlocking device.

School Day refers to the period from a student's arrival on the Academy site until dismissal at the end of the normal school day, including tutor time, lesson transitions, break, lunch, assemblies and enrichment activities.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

6.1 The Local Governing Body / Interim Standards Committee

The Local Governing Body/Interim Standards Committee is responsible for:

- approving this policy;
- ensuring the Academy has appropriate systems in place to implement the policy consistently;
- monitoring the effectiveness of the policy through scheduled reports from the Headteacher; and
- reviewing the policy in accordance with the agreed review cycle.

6.2 The Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring:

- this policy is implemented consistently across the Academy;
- appropriate resources are available to operate the secure lockable phone pouch system effectively;
- staff receive appropriate training and guidance;
- reasonable adjustments are made where required under the Equality Act 2010;
- parents and carers are informed of the Academy's expectations; and
- monitoring information is used to evaluate the impact of the policy on behaviour, safeguarding and learning.

6.3 Senior Leaders

Senior Leaders will:

- monitor compliance with this policy;
- support staff in implementing expectations consistently;
- oversee sanctions where required;
- authorise any agreed exceptions to the policy;
- monitor safeguarding concerns involving mobile devices; and
- evaluate the effectiveness of the policy as part of the Academy's wider behaviour strategy.

6.4 Teaching and Support Staff

All staff are responsible for implementing this policy consistently.

Staff will:

- ensure that mobile phones remain secured in the Academy-issued lockable pouch throughout the school day;
- challenge any student found using or attempting to use a mobile phone or other unauthorised communication device;
- report breaches of this policy promptly through the Academy's behaviour systems;
- undertake spot checks where there is reason to believe a student is not complying with the policy;
- ensure unlocking stations remain secure and inaccessible to students;
- report damaged, missing or tampered pouches to the relevant Head of Year;
- support students in understanding the reasons behind the policy; and
- model positive and responsible use of technology at all times.

Staff authorised to hold unlocking devices are responsible for ensuring these are securely stored and only used in accordance with Academy procedures.

7. Responsibilities of Students

Students are expected to contribute positively to the calm and purposeful culture of Manchester Communication Academy by complying fully with this policy.

Students must:

- bring their Academy-issued secure lockable pouch to school every day;

- ensure any mobile phone brought to school is placed inside the pouch immediately upon arrival;
- keep the pouch securely on their person throughout the school day;
- follow all instructions given by members of staff regarding the operation of the pouch system;
- take reasonable care of both their phone and the Academy-issued pouch;
- return home with the pouch each day ready for use the following morning.

Students must not:

- remove their phone from the pouch during the school day;
- attempt to force open, tamper with or damage the pouch;
- bring magnets, unlocking devices or any other item intended to bypass the locking mechanism;
- bring a second mobile phone or additional communication device in an attempt to avoid the policy; or
- lend or exchange pouches with another student;
- use smart watches or other communication devices where these fall within the scope of this policy; or
- use headphones or wireless earbuds during the school day unless specifically authorised by a member of staff.

Students are expected to demonstrate the Academy values of **Responsibility, Respect and Resilience** by following this policy at all times.

8. Responsibilities of Parents and Carers

Parents and carers play an important role in supporting the successful implementation of this policy.

Parents and carers are expected to:

- ensure their child brings their Academy-issued pouch to school each day;
- reinforce the Academy's expectations regarding mobile phone use;
- avoid contacting students directly during the school day except in exceptional circumstances;
- contact the Academy Reception if urgent communication with their child is required;
- support Academy staff in enforcing this policy consistently;
- encourage responsible use of technology outside school hours; and
- ensure any loss or deliberate damage to an Academy-issued pouch is reported promptly.

Where a pouch is deliberately damaged or lost due to negligence, parents and carers may be required to contribute towards the replacement cost in accordance with the Academy's charging arrangements.

9. Secure Lockable Phone Pouch System

Manchester Communication Academy operates a secure lockable phone pouch system to ensure that mobile phones remain inaccessible throughout the school day while allowing students to retain possession of their device.

Each student will be issued with an individually allocated secure lockable pouch.

The pouch remains the property of Manchester Communication Academy and is issued for the student's use whilst they attend the Academy.

Students are responsible for bringing their pouch to school every day and ensuring it is treated with care.

9.1 Arrival at School

Upon arrival at the Academy, students who have brought a mobile phone must:

1. switch the device off or place it into silent mode;
2. place the phone inside the Academy-issued pouch;
3. securely lock the pouch before entering the main Academy building; and
4. keep the locked pouch with them throughout the school day.

Members of staff may supervise this process where appropriate.

Screening on Arrival

To support compliance with this policy, the Academy may use handheld electronic detection wands to screen students for mobile phones or other electronic devices that have not been secured within their Academy-issued pouch. Screening may take place on arrival or through routine spot checks during the school day. It will be undertaken respectfully and in accordance with Department for Education guidance. Where a student refuses screening, the matter will be referred to a senior member of staff and managed in accordance with the Academy's Behaviour Policy, taking account of any relevant safeguarding concerns, SEND or reasonable adjustments.

9.2 During the School Day

Throughout the school day:

- pouches must remain locked;
- phones must not be accessed for any reason unless authorised by the Headteacher or another designated senior member of staff;
- students must not attempt to bypass the locking mechanism;
- staff may carry out visual checks to ensure compliance.

Any attempt to access a phone during the school day will be treated as a breach of this policy.

9.3 End of the School Day

At the end of the school day

- authorised members of staff will unlock student pouches using the designated unlocking stations;
- students should only remove their phones once they have left the Academy building unless directed otherwise;
- students remain expected to behave responsibly when using their mobile phones immediately after leaving the Academy site.
- Students will exit the academy by the path behind English and Creative Arts. There will be a number of unlocking stations along the wall which can be used to remove phones from pouches.

9.4 Students Leaving Early

Where a student leaves school before the end of the normal school day due to illness, an appointment or other authorised reason, their pouch will be unlocked by Reception or another authorised member of staff before they leave the site.

If a child stays after school for an ESA / correction, they should exit by the sports hall and use the unlocking stations located there.

9.5 Forgotten Pouches

Where a student forgets their pouch:

- the mobile phone must be handed to duty staff immediately upon arrival;
- the phone will be securely stored for the duration of the school day;
- the phone will be returned at the end of the school day.
- repeated failure to bring the Academy-issued pouch may result in behaviour sanctions.

Students must not retain possession of an unsecured phone during the school day because they have forgotten their pouch.

10. Use of Mobile Phones and Other Communication Devices

Manchester Communication Academy operates a mobile phone free environment throughout the school day. Whilst students may bring a mobile phone to school, it must remain secured within the Academy-issued lockable phone pouch and must not be accessed unless authorised by a member of staff.

The Academy's expectations apply equally to all communication devices capable of:

- making or receiving telephone calls;

- sending or receiving text messages;
- accessing the internet;
- recording audio or video;
- taking photographs;
- accessing social media or messaging platforms; or
- connecting to another device for communication purposes.

The following devices are covered by this policy:

- Mobile phones;
- Smartphones;
- Smart watches with communication or internet capability;
- Tablets (unless specifically authorised for educational purposes);
- Wireless earbuds or headphones connected to a mobile device; and
- Any future electronic device with similar communication capability.

Students may only access these devices where expressly authorised by a member of staff for educational, safeguarding or medical reasons.

11. Unacceptable Use

The following behaviours are prohibited at all times during the school day:

- accessing a mobile phone whilst on the Academy site;
- making or receiving telephone calls;
- sending or receiving text messages;
- accessing the internet;
- using social media platforms;
- recording audio;
- photographing or filming students or staff;
- livestreaming or sharing digital content;
- using artificial intelligence applications to complete schoolwork without permission;
- using headphones or wireless earbuds without authorisation;
- attempting to bypass the secure phone pouch system;
- bringing additional mobile phones or communication devices to school to avoid compliance with this policy.

Any use of a mobile phone to intimidate, threaten, bully, harass or humiliate another person will be treated as a serious behaviour incident and may also constitute a safeguarding concern.

Where appropriate, incidents may be referred to Greater Manchester Police.

12. Social Media

Students must not access social media during the school day.

This includes, but is not limited to:

- Snapchat;
- Instagram;
- TikTok;
- Facebook;
- WhatsApp;
- Discord;
- X (formerly Twitter);
- BeReal; and
- any similar messaging or social networking platform.

The Academy recognises that many safeguarding concerns originate through online communication outside school hours but continue into school.

Removing access to mobile phones during the school day helps:

- reduce cyberbullying;
- reduce conflict between students;
- improve concentration;
- improve student wellbeing;
- increase positive face-to-face interaction;
- reduce safeguarding concerns linked to inappropriate online content.

Parents are encouraged to monitor their child's use of social media outside school and ensure age restrictions are observed.

13. Smart Watches and Other Wearable Technology

Smart watches capable of:

- sending messages;
- making calls;
- accessing the internet;
- recording conversations;
- taking photographs; or

- receiving notifications

are considered communication devices under this policy.

Students must not use these devices during the school day.

Where necessary, students may be required to remove a smart watch and store it securely in their lockable phone pouch.

Traditional analogue or digital watches that tell the time only may continue to be worn.

14. Educational Visits and Off-site Activities

This policy applies during all educational visits, enrichment activities, sporting events and residential visits organised by Manchester Communication Academy unless alternative arrangements have been communicated beforehand.

Where students are permitted to carry mobile phones during a visit, staff will clearly explain:

- when devices may be used;
- when devices must remain secured;
- expectations regarding photography;
- safeguarding requirements; and
- consequences for misuse.

Staff retain the authority to confiscate or secure devices where necessary.

15. Public Examinations

Mobile phones are strictly prohibited during all examinations and formal assessments in accordance with the regulations of the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ).

Students must:

- switch off all mobile phones before entering the examination room;
- surrender devices where instructed;
- ensure smart watches and other electronic devices are not worn.

Failure to comply may constitute examination malpractice and could result in disqualification from the examination in accordance with JCQ regulations.

16. Safeguarding

The Academy recognises that unrestricted mobile phone use presents a number of safeguarding risks.

These include:

- cyberbullying;
- inappropriate photography or filming;
- sharing indecent images;
- online exploitation;
- exposure to harmful or extremist content;
- gambling;
- access to inappropriate websites;
- unauthorised contact from adults;
- livestreaming incidents within school;
- misuse of artificial intelligence technologies.

Removing access to mobile phones during the school day significantly reduces opportunities for these risks to occur within school.

Where concerns arise regarding the content of a mobile phone, staff will act in accordance with:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education;
- Searching, Screening and Confiscation guidance;
- the Academy's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Safeguarding concerns involving electronic devices will always take precedence over routine behaviour matters.

17. Searching, Screening and Confiscation

The Academy may screen students using handheld electronic detection wands to identify mobile phones or other electronic devices that have not been secured in their Academy-issued pouch. Screening will be undertaken in accordance with Department for Education guidance and does not require the student's consent.

Where there are reasonable grounds to believe that a student has breached this policy, staff may request that the student produces or surrenders their mobile phone or other communication device.

Authorised members of staff may conduct searches where permitted by law and in accordance with the Academy's Behaviour Policy and the Department for Education's *Searching, Screening and Confiscation* guidance. Searches without consent will only be undertaken where the relevant legal requirements are met, including those relating to staff authorisation, prohibited items, the presence of a witness and the sex of the person conducting the search, subject to any lawful exceptions.

Where a student refuses to cooperate with a request or screening, the matter will be referred to a senior member of staff. Any subsequent action will be proportionate and will take account of the student's individual circumstances, including safeguarding concerns, SEND and reasonable adjustments.

Mobile phones and other electronic devices may be confiscated where lawful and appropriate, in accordance with the Academy's Behaviour Policy. Any safeguarding concerns identified during screening, searching or confiscation will be managed in accordance with the Academy's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

18. Storage of Confiscated Devices

Where a mobile phone or communication device is confiscated, it will:

- be switched off where possible;
- be placed into a secure container;
- be stored securely within the Academy;
- only be returned in accordance with Academy procedures.

19. Lost, Stolen or Damaged Mobile Phones

Students bring mobile phones to school entirely at their own risk.

Whilst the Academy takes reasonable steps to promote security, it cannot accept responsibility for:

- loss;
- theft;
- accidental damage; or
- malfunction

of personal mobile phones brought onto the Academy site.

Students are reminded that the safest option is not to bring valuable devices to school unless absolutely necessary.

Any suspected theft should be reported immediately to the appropriate Head of Year or a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

20. Lost phone pouches

The Academy will investigate each incident before issuing a replacement.

Where a pouch has been lost due to negligence or repeated carelessness, parents and carers will be asked to pay towards the replacement cost.

20.1 Damaged Phone Pouches

Students must not:

- deliberately damage;
- tamper with;
- cut;
- write on;
- force open; or
- attempt to modify

their Academy-issued pouch.

Any deliberate damage will be treated as a serious breach of this policy.

Where damage is considered deliberate or caused through misuse, parents and carers will be charged for the replacement cost of the pouch.

21. Medical Needs and Reasonable Adjustments

Manchester Communication Academy recognises that, in exceptional circumstances, a student may require access to a mobile phone during the school day due to a medical condition or disability. In these circumstances, it is the expectation that the mobile phone is stored in an alternative pouch which will provide access.

Examples may include:

- management of diabetes;
- medical monitoring equipment linked to a mobile device;
- communication needs arising from a disability;
- other exceptional circumstances where an individual adjustment is considered necessary.

Any exception must:

- be agreed in advance by the Headteacher (or delegated senior leader);

- be supported by the SENDCo where appropriate;
- form part of an agreed support plan;
- be reviewed regularly to ensure it remains appropriate.

Reasonable adjustments will always be made in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

Exceptions will be rare and will be managed discreetly to protect the dignity and privacy of the student.

22. Breaches of this Policy

Failure to comply with this policy undermines the calm, safe and purposeful environment that Manchester Communication Academy seeks to provide.

Examples of breaches include, but are not limited to:

- failing to place a mobile phone in the Academy-issued pouch;
- accessing a mobile phone during the school day;
- bringing a second mobile phone or communication device to school;
- attempting to bypass the locking mechanism;
- possessing magnets, unlocking tools or similar devices intended to open the pouch;
- refusing to follow staff instructions;
- using a smart watch or other communication device contrary to this policy;
- recording or photographing members of the school community without permission;
- damaging or tampering with an Academy-issued pouch.

Each incident will be considered individually, taking account of the circumstances and any relevant safeguarding or SEND considerations.

23. Responding to Breaches

Any breach of this policy will be managed in accordance with the Academy's Behaviour Policy.

Consequences will be proportionate to the nature, seriousness and frequency of the breach.

Depending upon the circumstances, sanctions may include:

- behaviour points or other classroom sanctions;
- detention;
- confiscation of the device;
- removal from lessons;
- correction or reset;
- parental meeting;

- suspension where persistent or serious breaches occur.

Deliberate attempts to undermine the Academy's phone pouch system, including bringing additional devices or damaging Academy equipment, will be treated as serious misconduct.

Where the misuse of a mobile phone constitutes bullying, harassment, safeguarding concerns or criminal behaviour, additional action may be taken, including referral to external agencies where appropriate.

24. Persistent Non-Compliance

Where a student repeatedly fails to comply with this policy, the Academy will work in partnership with parents and carers to secure improvement.

This may include:

- meetings with parents or carers;
- targeted pastoral support;
- behaviour monitoring;
- individual behaviour plans;
- additional supervision during arrival and departure;
- other reasonable measures deemed appropriate by the Academy.

Persistent refusal to comply with this policy may ultimately result in suspension where all other reasonable interventions have been exhausted.

25. Emergency Communication

Manchester Communication Academy recognises that there may occasionally be situations where urgent communication between home and school is required.

Parents and carers must contact the Academy Reception if they need to pass an urgent message to their child.

Similarly, where a student needs to contact home during the school day, this will be facilitated by an appropriate member of staff using Academy systems.

Students should not access their personal mobile phone for this purpose.

This arrangement ensures that:

- communication is managed safely;
- safeguarding responsibilities are maintained;

- students receive appropriate support where necessary.

26. Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring the effective implementation of this policy.

The Academy will monitor:

- compliance with the secure phone pouch system;
- behaviour incidents relating to mobile phones;
- safeguarding concerns involving electronic devices;
- incidents of cyberbullying during the school day;
- damage to Academy-issued pouches;
- feedback from students, staff and parents.

The effectiveness of this policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if:

- Department for Education guidance changes;
- legislation changes;
- operational experience identifies improvements;
- the Local Governing Body requests an earlier review.

Any amendments will be approved through the Academy's governance procedures.

27. Linked Policies

This policy should be read alongside the following Academy policies:

- Behaviour Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- SEND Policy
- Examinations Policy
- Searching, Screening and Confiscation Procedures
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct