Use of Mobile Phones, Devices and Cameras Policy

Purpose

This policy outlines the safe, appropriate and professional use of mobile phones, electronic devices and cameras within Manor Farm. It aims to safeguard children and young people, protect staff, maintain professional boundaries, ensure the secure handling of information and promote a safe, focused and supportive learning environment.

Manor Farm recognises that electronic devices may form part of an individual's communication, sensory regulation or emotional wellbeing strategies. The setting therefore adopts a clear approach to device use that balances safeguarding requirements with the need to consider individual circumstances and reasonable adjustments.

This policy applies to all staff, visitors, children and young people while on site or participating in off-site activities organised by Manor Farm.

Staff Use of Mobile Phones and Electronic Devices

Setting Devices

- Manor Farm provides dedicated work mobile phones for authorised professional communication and setting laptops and iPads for educational and professional use.
- A designated setting iPad is available for off-site activities and educational trips.
- Setting iPads and laptops are secured through Apple and Microsoft for Education, with appropriate access restrictions and safeguarding controls.
- Work mobile phones must be used by members of the leadership team when contacting parents, carers, external professionals and other agencies.
- Staff must ensure that setting devices are used appropriately, stored securely and handled in accordance with the setting's safeguarding, confidentiality and data protection procedures.

Personal Devices

- Staff personal mobile phones and Bluetooth-enabled devices, including smartwatches, must be removed during any intimate care.
- Personal devices must never be used to photograph, film or audio-record children and young people.
- Staff must not use personal devices to access, store or share confidential information relating to children, young people, families or colleagues.

Permitted Use of Personal Phones

Personal mobile phones may only be used in the following circumstances:

- In an emergency or where an immediate safety concern requires contact with colleagues or emergency services.
- For essential day-to-day setting communications using the secure Microsoft Teams chat.
- Where a specific exception or reasonable adjustment has been agreed with leadership.

Urgent personal calls may be made in the designated staff room, away from children and young people.

Professional Communication with Parents, Carers and External Professionals
Leadership Responsibilities

- Only members of the leadership team, including class lead teachers, are authorised to initiate or undertake direct communication with parents, carers, external professionals and other external agencies on behalf of Manor Farm.
- Leadership team members must use their designated work mobile phones when making telephone calls or sending text messages, however email communicate is preferrable, to parents, carers and professionals.
- Leadership team members' work mobile telephone numbers are identified in the signatures of their professional staff email addresses.
- Supporting teaching assistants (TAs) must not independently contact parents, carers, external professionals or other agencies. Where a TA identifies a need for communication, they must share the relevant information with the appropriate class lead or leadership staff member.
- Any immediate safeguarding concern must be communicated promptly to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or in their absence the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL) and must not be delayed while awaiting routine communication arrangements.

This approach ensures that communication remains consistent, professional, appropriately recorded and managed in accordance with safeguarding and confidentiality requirements.

Approved Communication Methods
All professional communication must take place through the approved methods outlined below.

Email

- Email must be used for formal communication, detailed updates, information sharing and matters requiring a written record.
- Staff must use their professional email accounts for work-related communication.
- Confidential or sensitive information must only be shared with authorised recipients and in accordance with the setting's data protection procedures.

Text messages

- Text messages may be used for routine, everyday communications, including brief updates, arrival and collection arrangements, and straightforward messages that do not require a detailed response.
- Text messages to parents, carers and external professionals must be sent by authorised members of leadership using their designated work mobile phones.
- Text messages must remain professional, appropriate and limited to the information necessary for the purpose of the communication.

- Sensitive information, detailed safeguarding information or confidential reports must not be shared through text messages where a more secure or appropriate method is required.

Telephone calls

- Leadership team members must use their designated work mobile phones for professional telephone calls with parents, carers, external professionals and other agencies.
- Telephone conversations involving significant decisions, safeguarding matters or important information must be recorded through the appropriate setting procedures on CPOMS where necessary.

WhatsApp and other messaging applications

- WhatsApp must not be used for any work-related communications, including communication with parents, carers, external professionals, other agencies or between staff members.
- This prohibition includes individual messages, group chats, voice messages, photographs, videos, documents and any other work-related information.
- Staff must not use other unauthorised messaging applications or personal social media accounts to communicate about children, young people, families or setting-related matters.

Internal Staff Communication

- Staff have access to a secure Microsoft Teams chat for internal professional communication.
- Important daily communications, updates and relevant information must be shared through the designated Teams chat to keep the team informed and support consistent approaches to children's and young people's needs.
- Staff must ensure that information shared through Teams is relevant, accurate and appropriate for the intended recipients.
- Confidential information must only be shared with colleagues who are authorised to access it.
- WhatsApp and other unauthorised messaging applications must not be used for internal work-related communication.
- Where information relates to an immediate safeguarding concern, an incident or a risk requiring urgent action, staff must communicate directly with the DSL or DDSL rather than relying solely on a Teams message.
- Staff must follow the setting's safeguarding and recording procedures when documenting incidents, significant changes in presentation, concerns or decisions.

Photography, Video and Audio Recording

- Photographs, videos and audio recordings of children and young people may only be made using approved setting devices and for authorised educational, assessment, safeguarding or promotional purposes.

- Staff must follow the setting's consent, safeguarding, confidentiality and data protection procedures before capturing or using images.
- Images may only be used for publicity or social media purposes where the appropriate prior written consent has been obtained from parents or carers and the proposed use complies with the setting's policies.
- Personal devices must never be used to photograph, film or record children and young people.
- Images and recordings must be stored securely, accessed only by authorised individuals and retained in accordance with the setting's data retention procedures.
- Images or recordings must not be shared through personal accounts, unauthorised messaging applications or personal social media platforms.
- Any suspected unauthorised recording, sharing of images or breach of these requirements must be reported promptly to leadership.

Mobile Phones and Devices During Intimate Care

- Before undertaking intimate care, staff must ensure that any personal mobile phone or camera-enabled smartwatch is securely stored away or handed to a member of staff who is not involved in the care task.
- Staff must not use personal devices to photograph, film or record a child or young person during intimate care.
- Staff must follow the Intimate Care Policy and all relevant safeguarding procedures at all times.
- Any concerns relating to professional boundaries, privacy or inappropriate device use during intimate care must be reported to leadership.

Children and Young People's Use of Mobile Phones and Electronic Devices

General Expectations

Manor Farm aims to maintain a safe, supportive learning environment in which children and young people can engage with learning, social connections and activities without unnecessary distraction or safeguarding risks associated with personal devices.

The setting's approach is informed by the Department for Education's *Mobile phones in schools* guidance and its wider safeguarding responsibilities. The guidance states that schools should be mobile phone-free environments by default, with exceptions considered where appropriate.

Children and young people should not routinely have access to personal mobile phones or other personal electronic devices during the Manor Farm day. Any device brought onto the premises must be handed to the child's or young person's class lead on arrival.

Secure Storage of Devices

- Mobile phones, iPads and other personal IT devices must be handed to the class lead upon arrival.
- The class lead is responsible for ensuring that devices are stored securely in a designated safe place until the end of the session.

- Devices must not be accessible to other children and young people during the Manor Farm day.
- Devices must be returned to the owner at the end of the session, in accordance with the setting's collection arrangements.
- Smartwatches and other wearable devices capable of communication, recording or internet access are subject to the same expectations where appropriate.
- Where a child or young person has an agreed individual arrangement requiring access to a device, the arrangements outlined in the following section of this policy must be followed.

These measures support safeguarding, emotional wellbeing, positive engagement in learning and the maintenance of appropriate boundaries.

Individual Access to Devices for Regulation, Communication or Disability-Related Needs
Reasonable Adjustments and Individual Needs
Manor Farm recognises that some children and young people may need access to a personal mobile phone or other electronic device to support disability-related needs, communication, sensory regulation, emotional wellbeing or medical requirements.

The Department for Education's *Mobile phones in schools* guidance acknowledges that: *"Allowing a disabled pupil access to their mobile phone during the school day, where it is necessary due to the nature of their disability, may be considered a reasonable adjustment."*

Manor Farm will consider individual circumstances and, where applicable, reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010. Any exception to the usual device restrictions must be based on the child's or young person's identified needs and agreed arrangements, rather than providing unrestricted access to a personal device.

Arrangements for Access
Where a child or young person indicates that they need to access their device during the Manor Farm day, for example to listen to music as a regulation strategy or to contact a parent or carer, the following procedures apply:

- The child or young person should communicate their need to a member of staff, who will liaise with the class lead.
- Access must be agreed by the class lead or an appropriate member of leadership, taking account of the child's or young person's individual needs, safeguarding considerations and any existing support or regulation plan.
- Where an ongoing or recurring need is identified, leadership should consider whether a formal individual arrangement is appropriate, in consultation with parents or carers and relevant professionals where necessary.
- The device must be accessed in a designated safe space away from other children and young people, where privacy and appropriate supervision can be maintained.
- An appropriate supporting adult must remain with the child or young person throughout the period of access, in accordance with their individual needs and agreed safeguarding arrangements.

- Access must be limited to the agreed purpose and duration, with staff providing support where necessary to ensure that the device is used safely and appropriately.
- Where access is required to contact a parent or carer, this must be facilitated in accordance with Manor Farm's communication procedures and any agreed arrangements.
- The child or young person must not use the device to photograph, film or record others, access inappropriate content, or bypass Manor Farm's safeguarding arrangements.
- Once access is complete, the device must be returned promptly to the class lead and securely stored for the remainder of the session, unless a different arrangement has been formally agreed.

These arrangements aim to balance safeguarding requirements with a responsive, trauma-informed and child-centred approach that recognises individual sensory, communication and emotional regulation needs.

Reviewing Individual Arrangements

- Individual device arrangements must be proportionate to the identified need and reviewed where circumstances change.
- Leadership may consult with parents or carers and relevant professionals to establish the purpose, frequency and appropriate safeguards for device access.
- Where a device is required as part of a wider regulation or communication strategy, this should be reflected in the child's or young person's individual risk assessment where appropriate.
- Staff must report any concerns about device use, changes in need or difficulties maintaining the agreed arrangements to the class lead or leadership.

Smart Devices and Internet-Enabled Technology

- Young people with smartwatches and personal devices capable of internet access, communication, audio or video recording should not routinely be brought into the setting unless required for an identified need.
- Where a device is required to meet an individual need, approval must be sought from leadership and appropriate arrangements agreed.
- Personal devices must not be connected to the internet during the Manor Farm day unless this has been specifically authorised as part of an agreed individual arrangement, for example medical purposes.
- Any agreed access must comply with the supervision, storage and safeguarding procedures set out in this policy.
- Staff must report any concerns involving inappropriate internet access, unauthorised recording, online safeguarding risks or breaches of this policy to leadership promptly.

Breaches of This Policy

All staff are responsible for understanding and following this policy.

Any breach involving inappropriate device use, unauthorised communication, photography or recording, disclosure of confidential information, or failure to follow agreed storage and supervision arrangements must be reported promptly to leadership.

Concerns involving potential harm, exploitation, inappropriate recording or other safeguarding risks must be managed in accordance with Manor Farm's safeguarding and child protection procedures.

Leadership will consider the circumstances of any breach and determine appropriate follow-up action in line with relevant setting policies and procedures.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually and following any relevant changes to statutory guidance, safeguarding requirements, data protection obligations or the setting's operational arrangements.

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if required.

Policy Last Reviewed: 15th October 2026

Next Review Due: 15th October 2027