

Smartphone Use Policy

Version 1.0

1. Purpose of this Policy

This policy sets out Learn With Confidence's approach to smartphone use within our provision. It reflects our commitment to building positive relationships, supporting neurodiverse learners, and creating an environment where students feel safe, regulated, and able to engage meaningfully in learning.

2. Context: National Smartphone Ban in Schools (June 2026)

In June 2026, the Department for Education introduced a national ban on smartphone use during the school day in state-funded schools. As Learn With Confidence is a part-time alternative provision and not a state-run school, we operate differently from mainstream settings covered by the national guidance. We will continue to monitor developments and ensure our approach remains appropriate and compliant.

3. Future Legislation: Proposed Social Media Ban for Under-16s (Spring 2027)

The Government has announced its intention to introduce a ban on social media use for children under the age of 16, expected to come into effect in spring 2027. While details of the legislation are still emerging, LwC is committed to responding sensitively and thoughtfully.

We will:

- monitor the development of the legislation closely
- work collaboratively with families to understand individual needs
- support learners to navigate any changes safely
- ensure that any adjustments protect relationships, regulation, and emotional wellbeing

Many of our learners use their phones to regulate, communicate, and feel safe. Should the ban come into force, we will take a gradual, supportive, and personalised approach to help learners adapt without causing unnecessary distress or conflict.

4. Our Principles

4.1 Relationship-Centred Practice

Our provision is built on strong relationships and collaborative working with our learners. A blanket ban on smartphones would create unnecessary conflict, undermine trust, and work against the relational foundations that enable our students to thrive.

4.2 Re-Engagement with Education

The aim of our provision is to re-engage learners with education in any way possible. For some young people, this includes the use of their smartphone as a tool to:

- build relationships
- play games as part of settling and connecting
- support regulation and reduce anxiety
- explore subjects linked to their special interests

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- share stories, photos, and experiences with staff as part of a positive, collaborative relationship

For certain learners, **ongoing and supported phone use** is an important part of helping them feel comfortable enough to participate in learning.

4.3 Neurodiversity-Affirming Approach

Most of our learners are neurodiverse and use their phones as part of their regulation strategies. For many, access to a smartphone helps manage anxiety, sensory overload, transitions, and periods of dysregulation. Removing this tool would be counterproductive and, in some cases, harmful.

4.4 Awareness of Smartphone Dependency

A number of learners arrive at LwC with significant dependency on their phones. We recognise this as part of their wider profile and work therapeutically to reduce reliance over time. A ban would escalate distress and damage relationships, whereas a supported, gradual approach enables progress.

4.5 Safety and Communication

Many learners rely on their phones to feel safe when travelling to and from sessions, and to remain in contact with parents or carers. For some, this is essential for emotional security and wellbeing.

4.6 Skilled Staff Practice

Our teachers are skilled at supporting learners to reduce phone use during sessions. This is done through:

- gentle prompting
- negotiated boundaries
- co-regulation
- clear expectations
- collaborative problem-solving

This approach is effective and avoids unnecessary confrontation.

5. Expectations for Smartphone Use at LwC

5.1 During Sessions

- Learners may have their phones with them.
- Teachers will work with learners to minimise phone use during learning activities.
- If a learner is dysregulated, anxious, or overwhelmed, staff may agree short, supported breaks where phone use is permitted.
- Staff will encourage learners to place phones on silent or face-down during focused tasks.

5.2 Breaks and Transitions

- Learners may use their phones during breaks.
- Staff may support learners to transition back into learning by agreeing a clear end point for phone use.

5.3 Safety and Communication

- Learners may keep their phones with them for communication with parents/carers when travelling to and from sessions.
- During sessions, learners are offered support to contact parents/carers if needed, particularly if they are anxious, dysregulated, or require reassurance.
- Staff will work collaboratively with learners to ensure communication does not significantly disrupt learning, while recognising that contact with home can be an important part of feeling safe.

5.4 Misuse of Phones

If a learner's phone use becomes significantly disruptive or prevents engagement:

- staff will work collaboratively with the learner to agree boundaries
- parents/carers may be contacted to support consistent expectations
- a personalised plan may be put in place

We do not confiscate phones except in exceptional safeguarding circumstances.

6. Safeguarding Considerations

Smartphones can present safeguarding risks. LwC will:

- remind learners about safe online behaviour
- encourage appropriate use of social media
- intervene if phone use poses a risk to the learner or others
- follow safeguarding procedures where necessary

7. Review of Policy

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if national guidance changes or if learner needs indicate that adjustments are required.

Version Control			
Version No.	Date	Author	Notes
1.0	19 th August 2026	K Perry	Initial Draft