

1st March 2024

Dear Parent/Carer

Mobile Phone Use in School

Recently, you may have heard or seen headlines regarding the government banning mobile phones in schools. It is important to highlight that, despite some misleading headlines, this is non-statutory guidance, and it remains for school leadership teams to decide their approach to mobile phone use in school.

It is my view that mobile phones are a major part of everyday life. Mobile phones not only impact on how we live, but the whole nature of how we work has changed because of mobile phones. I feel this will only increase as mobile phone technology develops further. Therefore, our duty as educators should not be to ban something that is so central, but instead help students develop the skills to use them safely, appropriately and effectively.

Given the age range of our students, as you will be aware, we have embraced the use of mobile phone technology in school during lessons under teacher instruction for several reasons including:

- To allow students to have immediate access to Microsoft 365's range of apps so they can take ownership of their learning and independent study. This is through frequent use of their calendar, Teams account (which we use to set homework) and their personal email;
- To prepare students to be able to use technology, which is embraced in a range of industries and Post 16 and 18 destinations including universities, apprenticeships and employment;
- To communicate with their teachers and have a version of their timetable permanently available;
- To use their own OneDrive account to consolidate their learning through activities such as copying video recordings and presentations, uploading images of lesson notes, and saving information directly into their account;
- To access resources from SharePoint, which are made available to them by departments. These resources can enhance students' understanding of content;
- To take photos of key information in lessons, use dictation software to help construct paragraphs, and to set reminders for key events in their schedule.

Therefore, for the reasons outlined above, alongside the safety benefits of parents/carers being able to contact their children should they need to before or after school, we will not be banning mobile phones at WBHS.

We ask you to support us by ensuring parental controls are set up on all student devices, so they do not have access to unrestricted networks at any time. Most social media apps enforce an age of 13 to use with the exception of WhatsApp, which is for users aged 16 and above. If you need to set up parental controls, support is available from all mobile network providers, but also through our Safeguarding and E-Safety sections of the school website.

Therefore, we will continue with our current approach to mobile phones outlined below, which can be found in the school's Behaviour Policy:

On-line behaviour: In conjunction with the E-Safety policy, students are expected to act responsibly when using mobile phones in school.

It is made clear to all students that the same standards of behaviour are expected online as they are with face-to-face interactions (offline), where everyone in our school community should be treated with kindness, respect and dignity. This is carried out as part of our commitment to E-safety by students consenting to our Acceptable Use Policy every time they log on to a computer in school, which is further emphasised in the Personal Development Programme and termly assemblies. Inappropriate online behaviour including bullying, child-on-child abuse, the use of inappropriate language, the soliciting and sharing of nude or semi-nude images and videos and sexual harassment, will be addressed in accordance with the same principles as offline behaviour. This will include following the child protection policy and speaking to the Designated Safeguarding Lead when an incident raises a safeguarding concern.

Any cases of cyber bullying, sexting or other inappropriate on-line behaviour will be dealt with appropriately, usually involving parents and, if necessary, the police. A guide to online behaviour and appropriate actions and sanctions is available in the E-Safety Policy.

During lessons or tutor time students are asked to place mobile phones in their bags (or a box provided), unless they are being used for learning directed by their teacher. Students will be reminded about this at the start of the lesson.

If a member of staff has an issue with students placing phones away, they will call for support using the 'purple card' team (senior members of staff). A member of the purple card team will come to the class to try to resolve the situation swiftly so students can get back to learning in their lesson.

If a student still refuses to place their phone away, their phone will be stored for safekeeping until lunchtime, or the end of the school day and the student may also be removed from that lesson. Students will not be able to access their phone during this period.

For students who have had their phone removed several times, parents will be notified and invited to school to discuss this. In extreme cases of defiance, a student may be suspended, or not allowed to have their phone with them in school.

Therefore, to be clear, our policy highlights students should have their phones off and in their bags during lessons and registration/tutorials unless directed otherwise by their teachers. Students are aware of the PowerPoint slide we have shared with them relating to mobile phones which states 'Off and away unless we say'.

We will continue to allow students to use their phones during their break time and lunch.

I hope I can count on your support in relation to our approach to mobile phone use which we consider appropriate and proportionate given the age profile of our students and the many benefits they offer.

Yours faithfully



Steve Wilson
Headteacher