

1st April 2026

Dear Parent/Carer

I am writing to update you regarding our mobile phone policy and our intentions to change the school day from September 2026.

Mobile Phones – new approach:

I wrote to you on 27th January explaining that Bridget Phillipson (The Secretary of State for Education) has strengthened the guidance regarding mobile phone use in schools. Indeed, she has stated:

'I have always been clear that mobile phones have no place in schools. All schools should be phone free environments for the entire school day. That includes lessons, times between lessons, breaktimes and lunchtime.'

Based on this new strengthened guidance, we have had a period of research and reflection. This has involved discussions with teachers, the student council, school governors, the Local Authority and visiting other schools, which has led us to decide to change our approach. Additional to this, we have consulted with our Safeguarding advisors and worked with our curriculum leaders and Training Team, to develop plans to ensure that the changes we intend to introduce will have a positive impact on student learning.

Consequently, with the agreement of Governors, we will be making Whitley Bay High School a phone free school. This will take effect as Yr.11 and Yr.13 are finishing their GCSE and A Level exams.

Therefore, from 15th June 2026, Yr.9 and Yr.10 students, will hand their device in to their tutor in the morning and collect it from them at the end of the day. This will involve:

- Students turning off and handing in their device during morning tutorial.
- Their device will be safely placed into a secure locker in their tutor room for the rest of the day.
- Students will collect their phones at the end of the school day from their tutor.
- This will take place during Period 5 (Period 4 on a Tuesday) which will finish 10 minutes earlier.
- The 10-minute reduction to Period 5 (Period 4 on a Tuesday) will be a temporary arrangement until September.

We are aware that this arrangement is very different to our current approach. Attached to this letter, and on our website, there is a list of FAQs which seeks to answer questions and to reassure you about our new approach. As parents and carers, you may wish to consider whether your child brings a device into school, and whether they wish to remain on site during lunch.

Offsite lunchtime arrangements

The safeguarding of our students during lunch has been at the forefront of our decision making, therefore we will be conducting assemblies and tutorials on how to stay safe in the community over lunch. Additional to this we are increasing our lunch time community duty staff to ensure an increased presence in the places students frequently visit. We appreciate your support in discussing and reinforcing these messages with your child.

Mobile Phones and Sixth Form

Our Sixth Form approach will also reflect Government guidance. Students will be allowed to keep their phone in their bag as they currently do, but they will be expected to use them in designated areas only which include the Sixth Form Study Centre and the Main Hall.

The School Day from September 2026

Even before the changes to the DfE's guidance regarding mobile phones was announced, we were considering increasing the timings of the school day to meet the updated requirements of our statutory Personal Development programme. These timings were also being considered to alleviate time pressures for students over lunch and provide further opportunities for our extracurricular programme.

Also, the government has strengthened its guidance on students being in school for a minimum of 32.5 hours a week (which includes lunch and break). Given this, with the agreement of Governors, from September 2026 our school day will start earlier and finish later. The changes include:

- The school day will begin at 8.40am every morning and start with a tutorial.
- Tutorial will be extended to 20 minutes every day, except Wednesday which will be 30 minutes.
- Lessons will remain 1 hour in length.
- Lunch will be 5 minutes longer.
- The end of the school day will include an additional tutorial period for lower school students.
- We will deliver the revised Personal Development programme during the afternoon tutorial, where students will also collect their phones prior to the end of day bell.
- The school day will finish for students at:
 - 3.25pm on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday (after a 15-minute tutorial at the end of the day)
 - 2.20pm on Tuesday to accommodate our staff training which is integral to the success of the school (after a 10-minute tutorial at the end of the day)
 - 3.15pm on Friday (after a 5-minute tutorial at the end of the day)

We have strived to balance the changes in the school day with the needs of parents/carers, students and staff. We felt an earlier start to the school day with a slightly later end of the day would work best.

Conclusion

Regarding the school day, I wanted to give parents/carers as much time as possible in advance of the change to allow time for any arrangements to be put in place prior to September.

Also, while there is no statutory process to go through to change the school day, I would like to give parents/carers an opportunity to express their views in relation to these changes. If you have any comments, please send them to info@whitleybayhighschool.org by Friday 1st May. Please note we will respond to emails after the Easter holiday.

I hope this letter has explained the reasons behind our new approach. May I encourage you to refer to the FAQ document for further information regarding the upcoming changes. The FAQ document will continue to be updated where necessary and can be found on the school website under School Information - Parent/Carer Letters and Key Publications.



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Please be reassured that we have considered all options and implications as far as possible, but we will continue to communicate any further modifications as they inevitably evolve.

Thank you for taking the time to read what is a lengthy letter and for your support in what we know is going to be a different approach.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'S. Wilson', is written over a light blue circular watermark that contains the letters 'WBHS'.

Steve Wilson
Headteacher