

7 April 2022

Dear Parents and Carers

Updated school policy: Student use of mobile phones in school

A report from the Office for National Statistics reported that 27% of young people who regularly access social media, experience mental health issues in comparison with 12% of young people who rarely use social media. We have sadly had incidents where students have used mobile phones inappropriately on our school site. In addition, we are worried about how dependent some of our young people are becoming on mobile phones and we have grave concerns about the mental and psychological impact these devices are having.

We deliver assemblies to students on mobile technology and the dangers of the internet to help them protect themselves and to support parents/carers, we will start to send out information which will include important advice about how you can keep your child safe online at home. Due to the concerns highlighted above, the school has decided to change its policy regarding mobile phones. The school has made the decision that students will continue to be allowed to bring a mobile phone onto the school site, however, **from Monday 25 April, all student mobile phones must remain switched off and in a bag for the duration of the school day.**

Students will not be allowed to keep a mobile on their person for example in a blazer or trouser pocket; this is to avoid the temptation for students to leave a mobile phone switched on and access it whilst in lessons or on the school site. It is important to note that this change of policy also applies to unstructured time during the school day including before school whilst present on the school site (after 8:45am), lesson changeovers, break time, lunchtime and after school detentions. We hope that this decision will allow students to be more focused in lessons, will encourage students to be more sociable and communicative in unstructured time and inhibit some of the negative psychological impacts from mobile phones discussed earlier.

If a student is seen using a mobile phone on the school site or if a mobile phone is not switched off during the school day, then the member of staff will confiscate the mobile phone. Any confiscated mobile phones will be logged and stored safely. On the first occasion of confiscation students will be able to collect their mobile phone at the end of the school day. However any further confiscations that term will require the parent/carer to come into school between the hours of 9:00am-2:30pm or 3:30pm-4:00pm to collect the device.

If a student refuses to hand over a mobile phone when asked to do so, then the student will be placed into internal isolation (or if required on rare occasions suspended).

There may be occasions however, where a member of staff gives a student or group of student's specific permission to use it as a learning device e.g. in PE to watch a sporting technique. In these situations only and as long as the device is used for the correct reason as outlined by the member of staff, then students would obviously not be sanctioned and nor would the device be confiscated. Once the task involving mobile phone is completed, the students would be required to switch the device off and place them back in their bag.

We would also like to reassure parents/carers that if a student needs to contact home in an emergency, students can contact Student Reception to make a phone call on their behalf. Equally, if a parent/carer urgently needs to contact a student during the school day, then parents/carers can telephone Reception and a note can be passed to the student. **We kindly request that parents do not contact students directly on mobile devices during the school day.**

You may choose as a parent/carer to not send your child into school with a mobile phone. However, should you choose to send your child into school with a mobile phone, you must be aware that any mobile phone is brought onto the school site at the owner's own risk. The school will not accept any responsibility for the loss or damage to any device. We strongly advise parents/carers not to purchase very expensive mobile phone models in case of loss or damage.

We also feel that this is the appropriate time to remind parents/carers that earphones and (Bluetooth) speakers are also not allowed to be used at school. Again, if these items are used on the school site, then staff reserve the right to confiscate these items and again please see the above guidance on how they will be returned to the student or parent/carer depending on the frequency of confiscation. A sanction may also be issued depending on the circumstances.

Smart watches will still be permissible for students to wear on the school site as they have many different functions. However, as mobile phones will be required to be switched off and in bags during the school day, such wearable devices will not be allowed to be connected to mobiles and thus the internet. If a student is found to be using wearable technology to connect to a phone, then the wearable device, along with the phone, may be confiscated and a sanction issued in line with the school Praise and Behaviour Policy.

We are so lucky here at John Willmott School to have such supportive parents/carers and we hope that this letter has explained the rationale behind this decision, and we thank you in advance for your support in this matter.

Yours faithfully

Mrs N Gould
Acting Headteacher