Dear Parents and Carers,

I am writing to inform you of a significant and important update to our school's mobile phone policy, which will be implemented at the start of the new academic year in September.

This decision has not been taken lightly. It follows a period of careful consideration and rigorous research, and it is directly informed by the new Children's Wellbeing Act, which came into force on the 29th of June, alongside recent government decisions regarding children and social media - Article .

Our Safeguarding Duty and Rationale

As a school, our absolute priority is the safeguarding and well-being of our students. The new legislation reinforces our legal and moral responsibilities to provide an environment that actively protects young people.

Extensive research continues to highlight the profound impact that unrestricted smartphone and social media access can have on young minds. Studies show that constant connectivity during the school day acts as a significant barrier to learning, increases anxiety, and detracts from vital face-to-face social interactions. By removing these distractions, we are committing to creating a safer, healthier, and more focused environment where your children can thrive both academically and socially.

Policy Changes from September

As you are aware, we have operated an 'on-site, out of sight' mobile phone policy for a number of years. Unfortunately, despite our best efforts, a significant number of students do not follow this rule. We have increasingly found students accessing their phones in the toilets and other locations, or using their mobile data to create personal 'hotspots' to bypass school internet filters on their school devices during lessons. This bypass means we are unable to monitor what they are viewing, thus creating an unacceptable safeguarding risk. Consequently, a more robust system is required.

To ensure we are meeting our safeguarding and legal obligations and prioritising student wellbeing, the following protocols will be strictly enforced from September:

For Years 7 to 11: Introduction of Mobile Phone Pouches

- We will be introducing a mandatory secure pouch system for all students in Years 7 to 11.
- These pouches are specially designed to block all signal and network data. Because of this, **all phones must be turned off completely before they are placed inside the pouch**. Leaving phones switched on inside the signal-blocking material will cause the battery to drain rapidly as the device constantly searches for a network connection. It is a student's responsibility to ensure their phone is switched off.

- Students will be required to place their switched-off phones into the pouch as they arrive at the school gate. They will keep the pouch with them, but the phone will remain inaccessible for the entirety of the school day.
- The pouches will be unlocked at the exit gates at the end of the day, ensuring students still have access to their phones for their journeys to and from school.
- If a student forgets their phone pouch, they will have to hand in their phone at reception at the start of the day where it will be locked away.
- Forgetting their pouch will be viewed as forgetting equipment and students will receive a C1 which will escalate if they continue to forget their pouch.
- Please note - students should not have smartwatches or airpods/headphones either - if found in use the same consequences will apply.

Medical Exemptions and communication with child

- We recognise that some students have serious medical needs (such as managing diabetes) and rely on their mobile phones to monitor their health.
- Students with verified medical needs will be provided with a non-locking pouch. This ensures their phone remains out of sight to maintain the school environment, but remains fully accessible to the student whenever they need it for medical tracking.
- As per current policy, students can ask if they need to call home in an emergency. If parents have an urgent message for their child they should call reception as per current policy.

For Sixth Form - 'On-Site, Out of Sight'

- We recognise the growing independence of our Sixth Form students. Therefore, they will be permitted to carry their phones, but they will operate under a strict **'on-site, out of sight'** policy.
- Mobile phones may **only** be used within designated Sixth Form common room areas.
- Phones must not be seen or heard anywhere else on the school premises, including corridors, classrooms, private study and other shared social spaces.
- Headphones/airpods can only be used in common rooms. If used in Private study they can only be linked to laptop devices not mobile phones.

Breaches of Policy and Confiscation

We must be absolutely clear on the consequences of breaching these new rules to ensure the policy is effective for the whole school community.

- **Immediate Confiscation if a phone is seen or heard -** If any student (Year 7-11 or Sixth Form) is seen or heard using their phone smartwatch or airpods/headphones, or if a phone/headphones/airpods is heard or seen outside of the permitted rules, it will be confiscated immediately.
- **Collection Rules -** Confiscated phones will be held securely by the school and can **only be collected by a parent or carer on a Friday afternoon between 3:00 PM and**

4:45 PM. Phones will not be handed back to students under any circumstances, nor will they be released on other days of the week.

- **Sixth Form Repeat Breaches -** If a Sixth Form student breaches the 'on-site, out of sight' policy more than once, they will lose their common room privileges and a secure pouch will be introduced for that individual student for the remainder of the term.

Next Steps

We understand this is a significant operational change, but it is a necessary one rooted entirely in our commitment to your child's mental health and educational success.

I am sure there will be questions parents may have. We will not be able to respond to these individually, instead more detailed information including medical pouches and the daily logistics of the pouches will be shared with you before the 1st of September.

Thank you for your understanding, cooperation, and continued support in helping us foster a more engaged and present school community.

Yours faithfully,

Sarina Totty
Headteacher/CEO

Further Information

Children's Wellbeing Act - What Parents Need to Know
News article - Link to Article;
Research paper: Academic Paper
Government link: Growing up in the online world