

29<sup>th</sup> January 2025

Dear parent

## Use of Mobile Phones

For those of you who have been part of our community for some time, you may remember us changing the school rules around mobile phone use on site in September 2021. At that point we banned them from being seen or used in any way when on the school site, primarily as a result of safeguarding concerns connected to teenagers and the frequent use of mobile technology.

Unfortunately, whilst mobile phones absolutely have their place in the modern world, research is evidencing more and more detrimental effects of phone use on the teenage brain and in their social connections and the associated mental health impact.

As part of the Channel 4 documentary "Swiped, the school that banned smart phones" (Watch Swiped: The School That Banned Smartphones | Stream free on Channel 4 - it's well worth a watch), Dr Rangan Chatterjee noted that problematic use led to teenagers:

- Being 2 x more likely to suffer anxiety symptoms
- 60% more likely to have depression symptoms
- A quarter had brain scans that demonstrated a loss of grey matter similar to what you would expect to find in a substance misuser.

Following the experiment in the documentary to remove the students' devices for 3 weeks, they reported: -

- Better sleep
- Better concentration
- Increased working memory
- Feeling happier
- Less anxious
- More confident both socially and in their learning.

The evidence is very clear that we, as the adults around the teenagers, should be doing all we can to mediate for potential over-use and indeed phone addiction and as a school we have a responsibility to improve brain and emotional health via restricting mobile phone use.

It is for this reason that we are launching to students next week, that from **Monday 3rd February** we will be stepping up our procedures to make ALNS the mobile free site it should be.

We know that students might need, or even want, their phones on the way to and from school and as long as they (and the related earphones!) remain in their bag and silent whilst on site that is, of course, fine. We are not asking them to hand them in on the gate or any other measures that some schools are taking. However, we will be confiscating them if we see or hear them – every time!

**The first time** this happens, your child will get their phone back at the end of the day (it will be kept safely and securely behind reception).

**The second time**, the same thing will happen but as parents you will be alerted via email.

**The third offence**, you or another adult such as a grandparent will be asked to collect the mobile phone and your child may be asked to keep the phone at home if possible. Any defiance by students will be dealt with using our usual sanction system.

The most common excuses the students give for using their phone is to check their timetables (students must have their planners with them at all times, with the timetable stuck in) and checking the time (so we have installed a number of both digital and analogue clocks). These things combined will hopefully remove the need for phones in the daytime.

We hope you understand why we are taking these measures and support us in trying to limit phone use so that it does not damage this generation, who are the first to really experience a life as “digital natives”. **We would ask from you as parents to talk to your child over the coming week so that they are sure of the rules and that you, at home, support them.** We have deliberately built in a “warning” period to support this transition.

**Finally, please do not contact your child via their phone whilst at school and please be aware that we will use the sanctions outlined above should it become apparent that they have contacted you.** In emergencies, you are most welcome to ring the school and ask us to pass on a message and the students will be told they can come to reception to contact home if they need to (for example a forgotten PE kit or ingredients!).

Many thanks for your support.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katie Holness". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'K'.

Katie Holness  
Deputy Headteacher/Safeguarding Lead