


St Benedict's Catholic High School

Smart Device/Mobile Phone Policy

Approved by¹

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Position: **Chair of Governors**

Signed: 

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St Benedict's
Catholic High
School

Smart Device/Mobile Phone Policy

****For the purpose of this policy the term Smart Devices/Mobile Phones applies to mobile phones, smartwatches, iPads, and tablets****

This policy acknowledges the benefits to both students and parents of having a mobile phone/smart device available whilst travelling to and from school and the role that online social networking plays in modern society.

However, there has been significant coverage in the news in recent months over the use of smart devices/mobile phones in schools and how this affects the learning within school and how they can lead to bullying and inappropriate web usage. Many schools are deeply concerned about the effect smart devices/mobile phones are having on children's ability to socialise with each other. There is no need for a child to use a smart device/mobile phone for communication purposes during the school day. This policy is the school's considered response to the use of mobile phones/smart devices in school.

The policy is reasonable in supporting parents in their need to safeguard their children travelling to and from school, but it is also driven by the need to safeguard all students whilst in school and to guard against the inappropriate actions of others via a mobile phone/smart device. It also ensures that students are provided with the opportunity to focus on their learning and develop conversational skills without the interference of a mobile device.

Within school we have thorough filters on IT systems to prevent students from accessing inappropriate information on the school system. They also filter all internal communications (e.g. student emails) for use of any concerning language e.g. relating to bullying, self-harm, prejudice etc. This is for the safety of all students. Unfortunately, we cannot monitor smart devices in the same way. Students use them to photograph or video situations without consent, therefore, we feel the safety of our students is often compromised.

From March 2024 for the safety of all our students, smart devices/mobile phones, if brought into school, must be kept in student's bags (not in pockets), and switched off whilst on school premises.

Please note: Sixth form students may use tablets or laptops during their private study periods as part of their learning. Sixth form students are also permitted to use mobile phones at lunchtime within the Post 16 area balcony and library. (Use of mobile devices is NOT permitted in the Winter Garden area)

Expectations

To manage expectations and make sure everyone adheres to the policy, the policy will be delivered consistently. This policy is written to ensure that all students are safe from online harm at St Benedict's, no smart devices/mobile phones are to be seen, heard, or used by students on the Whitehaven campus site during the school day.

- To ensure that students and staff are fully safeguarded against incidents involving the use of smart devices.
- To ensure that all staff fully understand the position of the school in order to consistently implement it. Staff should be mindful of their responsibility to act as role models. Mobile phone use should be limited to work related use.

- To ensure that parents are fully aware of the change and the reasons for the change.

Smart devices/mobile phones can be brought into St Benedict's and stored in student's bags. Smart devices/mobile phones can be used to communicate with parents on the way to and from Campus Whitehaven.

Smart devices/mobile phones must be switched off and in bags, whilst in the school building and during school hours until the school site has been exited. This includes breaktime and lunchtime. Headphones and portable speakers should not be seen, heard, or used.

In case of emergency, students should alert a member of staff who will assist with the issue raised.

Consequences

Smart devices/mobile phones must not be seen or heard during the school day. Any smart devices/mobile phones being used, seen or heard by any member of staff during the school day will be confiscated immediately regardless of whether this is being used or not and returned to the student's parent, after 3.30pm (Mon – Wed) and after 2.30pm (Thursday and Friday). Parents will be informed. Phones will be stored securely and labelled with the name and form of the student.

Please note: St Benedict's Catholic High School is not liable for any loss or damage.

Failure to hand over a device will be dealt with in line with our behaviour policy and may lead to time within our reflection room. Persistent failure may result in suspension from school.

A member of the office staff will securely store the confiscated phone and a message will be sent via Edulink to inform parents.

The following sanction will apply: -

Confiscation until the end of the day (Parents to collect). If a parent/carer is unable to collect the device will be returned to the student the following day.

Such a confiscation is in line with Section 91 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, which enables a member of staff to confiscate, retain or dispose of a student's property as a disciplinary penalty, where reasonable to do so.

Searches

As a part of the school's Behaviour Policy, the Governors have decided that mobile phones and any item capable of taking a photographic image/recording or connecting to the internet – including smart watches and iPads are banned items in the sense that they cannot be used whilst on the school site, as such, students may be searched for such items which may then be confiscated in line with this policy.

Extra-Curricular Activities

This policy applies when in school or representing the school during any extra-curricular activities. During extra-curricular events/fixtures mobile phones can, **with the permission of the teacher**, be used solely to contact parents/carers for reasons relating to transport regarding the activity.

Use of smart devices/mobile phones on residential visits will be decided on a case-by-case basis.

Statutory Guidance for dealing with Electronic Devices

Staff confiscating such items should consult a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) if they are concerned about any data stored on such devices. Data or files can be examined by a member of the SLT if there is a good reason to do so. Following such an examination, any offending files or data may be erased if the member of SLT thinks there is good reason to do so.

The member of SLT must have regard to the following guidance issued by the Secretary of State when determining what is a “good reason” for examining or erasing the contents of an electronic device:

In determining a ‘good reason’ to examine or erase the data or files the staff member must reasonably suspect that the data or file on the device in question has been, or could be, used to cause harm, to disrupt teaching or break the school rules.

If inappropriate material is found on the device it is up to the member of the SLT to decide whether they should delete that material, retain it as evidence (of a criminal offence or a breach of school discipline) or whether the material is of such seriousness that it requires the involvement of the police.

Conclusion

The school accepts that having a mobile phone confiscated can cause some inconvenience. Parents often suggest that their child will be unable to go out because they are not allowed to without their phone, or that they have a travel pass on their phone. Parents are asked to consider such a response in the light of the real and serious safeguarding issues cited above. As a school, we have provided the means by which students can bring mobile phones to school. We have also, by means of this policy, and through assemblies with all year groups, communicated our very clear expectations with regard to mobile phones and other electronic devices along with the consequences of a lack of cooperation.