

10 June 2024

Parent/Carer

Dear Year 6 families,

In February 2024, the government issued new guidance about mobile phones. The guidance notes that,

'Schools should develop a mobile phone policy that prohibits the use of mobile phones and other smart technology with similar functionality to mobile phones (for example the ability to send and/or receive notifications or messages via mobile phone networks or the ability to record audio and/or video) throughout the school day, including during lessons, the time between lessons, breaktimes and lunchtime.'

We asked our Y7–Y13 families to share any views or thoughts and had 62 responses. In the main, responses were broadly supportive of our 'phone zones' approach but appreciated that a change to the current approach was necessary and could be very helpful to young people and families. It was felt that this could be particularly for younger students joining the community as it may take pressure off families to buy smart phones for their children at an age when they may be inappropriate and when the children certainly are too young for most of the apps and social media platforms.

We also acknowledge that simply banning phones during school hours will not fully address the broader issue of social media's influence on young people. It is important to recognise that students have access to their phones before and after school, as well as during weekends and holidays, which collectively make up most of their waking hours.

New policy for HSS

Y7- Y11 - Never used, never seen, never heard on the school site

This also applies to Y6 students during Transition Day and Summer School.

From 17th June 2024, our updated mobile phone and smart technology policy will be,

- The use of mobile phones and other smart technology is prohibited for all students Y7-Y11 at HSS.
- Any student found with a mobile phone in school will have it confiscated (*i.e. looking at it, checking it, using it*). The confiscation will be noted as a breach of our behaviour policy. The child will collect their mobile phone from the House Office at the end of the school day. Repeat offenders will have their phones/devices retained until a parent or carer can collect the phone. (*NB this is no change from the current policy*)

- Students may have phones in their bags, switched off for the duration of the school day. We do not expect to see them or hear them. This includes time in school before or after the official school day.
- Restrictions on mobile phone use will also apply during school trips and visits which take place during the school day. Students are permitted to have phones with them on trips if they are switched off and in their bags. Restrictions on the use of mobile phones will also apply during the High Storrs Hike and Sports Day – students will be allowed to have phones with them in their bags, but not for use during the school day. Students will be permitted to use mobile phones during out of hours trips and residential e.g. evening theatre trips, Ski Trip, etc. but this will be under the guidance of staff (as is the case now).
- Headphones (in any form) should not be seen at any time in school. If students choose to use headphones when travelling to and from school (mindful of personal safety), they must remove them before they enter the school site. If seen in school, they will be confiscated as above (*NB this is no change from the current policy*)

Y12-13

From 17th June 2024, our updated mobile phone and smart technology policy will be,

- The use of mobile phones, headphones and other smart technology is acceptable in the closed Sixth Form study spaces but prohibited in the rest of the school building for all students Y12-13. These designated phone zones will be clearly signposted and communicated to students.
- Any student found with a mobile phone or headphones outside of the designated Sixth Form spaces will have it confiscated (*i.e. looking at it, checking it, using it*). The confiscation will be noted as a breach of our behaviour policy. The child will collect their mobile phone from the Sixth Form Office at the end of the school day. Repeat offenders will have their phones/devices retained until a parent or carer can collect the phone. (*NB this is no change from the current policy*)
- Outside the designated Sixth Form spaces, students may have phones in their bags and switched off. We do not expect to see them or hear them. This includes time in school before or after the official school day.
- Restrictions on mobile phone use will also apply during school trips and visits which take place during the school day (as above).
- If students choose to use headphones when travelling to and from school (mindful of personal safety), they must remove them before they enter the school site. If seen in school, they will be confiscated as above (*NB this is no change from the current policy*)

The heart of this approach is '**Never used, seen or heard**' on the school site, whilst also reflecting that Sixth Form students have increased independence and responsibility around mobile phone use. We will update key policies and our 'non negotiables' to reflect this change.

Why 17th June 2024?

We have chosen the date carefully, mindful that our Y11 and Y13 students will have completed their exams but also because it is before our Y6 and Y12 induction days. This way, our newest students will be guided by the new policy from the outset. Plus, we will also have several weeks to see how the new policy works and if there are any aspects we need to clarify or tweak.

We also appreciate that there may be individual cases where we need to make short term individual adjustments to support a child (e.g. a child in crisis). Whenever we do make a reasonable adjustment to the policy, we will note it and work with the child and their family to agree the arrangements for short-term use of a phone in school.

From September 2024, for some coursework elements in KS5 lessons there will be a fixed term use of phones planned into the curriculum. In these instances, the fixed period of phone use will be shared with students and families ahead. During these times, students must keep their phones in their bags whilst walking from Sixth Form spaces to their classrooms.

Other considerations

We realise that you will have several further questions about how all this will work in practice. Mindful of that, we have created a 'frequently asked questions' document with the help of our staff. It is attached with this letter.

Please do discuss this letter with your children before any Y6 Transition events.

Best wishes,

High Storrs School