



Friday, July 8, 2022

Dear Parents/ Guardians,

Sadly, I must write to you again on the most serious of notes in relation to mobile phones, their usage and some of the content being shared, causing significant and deep concern. Our role in school as educators and protectors of our vulnerable young people is being compromised across the board due to mobile phone usage alongside totally unacceptable, inappropriate and/or sometime cruel and unkind messages shared directly or with groups. It must be dealt with.

We must work together to protect pupils from all that surrounds the negative use of phones, a complex and dangerous 'minefield'. In this letter, I seek to secure your understanding of the potential for long-lasting and irreversible consequences from inappropriate mobile use and present a way forward. The Senior Leadership and whole school staff need your support and collaboration to deliver as follows.

We always seek for our pupils to be engaged with technology wherever possible, focusing on innovation and routes to employability in the future. This includes mobile phones as tools for independence. Nonetheless, our aims for inclusion and the encouragement of lived experience innovation in this context is being abused. This is not an issue unique to our School, but a considerable and growing problem for schools across the UK. As a school, we have been proactive in delivering lessons on e-safety and phone usage as a sad, but necessary part of growing up in the digital age. The ever-increasing number of reports and press coverage on the impact on health and wellbeing, online bullying and litigation stemming from negative use grows daily and must be learned from by all of us in this School community. If together, we all follow the School policy, we won't walk into an unpredictable and unforgiving 'minefield'.

Our vocation is teaching and learning, yet we are pulled away from this through the increased need to 'Police' mobile phone use and act as peacemakers for messages sent by pupils out of school hours. Real issues arise for us when pupils flout school policy, sending messages from phones hidden on their person, in school time. School rules on mobile phones have been shared with you previously, having been carefully considered within our inclusion, innovation and employability aims whilst also protecting children within safeguarding. Part of my role is to protect children adhering to the highly scrutinized Safeguarding procedures. Messages sent in school time is the key issue we must address. We cannot search children every day for hidden phones.

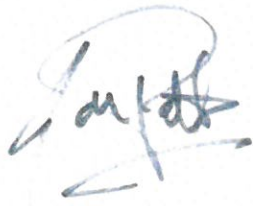
Given the electronic, time-dated footprint of messages sent and received appearing in the minefield of reported on litigation, we cannot have any mobile phones in school. Within my safeguarding role and for all the right reasons, I must draw a line in the sand. Children have been warned about mobile phone usage, the potential consequences, and the school rules. We are asking for your support of the school policy as parents and guardians having detailed why. Should there be any messages sent by flouting rules in school time which may cause offence, investigation or litigation, I have no option but to pass the dealing of the fallout with any external agencies directly to you. Time dated inappropriate messages out of school time are your responsibility.

The simple way forward reflected in the school policy is:

Residential pupil's mobile phones are to stay in their bedrooms and are not allowed into school.

If day pupils must bring their phones in to school they are to be handed in on arrival, to Mrs. Wynne to be kept safely until the end of the school day. If you need to contact pupils please contact the school office or Mrs. Warburton.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Dr JA Patterson', with a large, stylized flourish above the name.

Dr JA Patterson  
Principal