

Mobile
Phone Policy



Hydesville Tower
School, Walsall

September 2015

This policy should be read in conjunction with our policy “Acceptable use of ICT for all users”, and the associated agreement which is signed by all parents and pupils throughout the school.

AS MOST DEVICES ARE MULTI-PURPOSE, THIS POLICY APPLIES NOT ONLY TO MOBILE PHONES, BUT ALSO TO ANY OTHER ELECTRONIC DEVICE CAPABLE OF PLAYING OR RECORDING MUSIC OR VIDEO CLIPS OR CAPABLE OF TAKING PHOTOS.

Rationale

The implementation of our mobile phone policy will not cause any problems for the vast majority of Hydesville Tower School pupils who use their mobile phones sensibly.

Generally, problems with mobile phones fall into three categories – text, speech and images.

“Texting” enables students to 'talk' from any distance, from anywhere and at any time and gives them an outlet for personal and interpersonal interactions that may create or add to a range of problems which can have a negative impact on individuals. Extreme examples reported in the national press include 'cyber bullying'.

Camera and video phones combined with wireless technology enable students to make still images or videos of themselves or others and 'send' them to other phones or post them on the internet. Sometimes these can be candid images that have been taken without the consent or even knowledge of the person(s) involved. Occasionally, it can be with malicious intent.

Students with 'wireless' or blue tooth phones also can have unrestricted access to the internet and are able to download material from other similar devices. Many internet sites aim their content (text, music, images and videos) at young people who can download or upload files and then share them by sending them to other mobile phones. On some sites acceptable material, such as songs, cartoons or 'amusing' videos, are presented alongside unacceptable material putting vulnerable young people at risk.

At the extreme end there are a number of aspects of law that may apply to the misuse of mobile phones and other digital devices. In the most serious cases there may be a crime involved – for example, an incident being filmed might be an assault or breach of the peace. The misuse of phones might be an offence under the Communications Act 2003, if it involves a message that is grossly offensive or is of an indecent, obscene or menacing character.

These technological developments combined with the ever-changing world that our young people are growing up in present new and unprecedented challenges for schools.

Our mobile phone policy aims to deal with these problems in school by banning the use of mobile phones during the school day. In particular, pupils are not allowed to use them at all on the school site at any time, for any purpose.

Purpose

The inappropriate use of mobile phones in school or during school supervised activities can be damaging to the aims of our school community and the well-being of members of that community. We also wish to reduce the opportunities for theft within school.

Guidelines

- i. We accept that some students and parents see possession of mobile phones as an aid to personal security and safety and consequently, where a senior school student does bring a mobile phone to school the phone must be kept switched off, in their locker. Prep school pupils are not allowed to bring mobile phones to school. If contact with parents needs to be made by the pupil then the School Office phone can be used under the supervision of a member of staff.
- ii. The school will not accept liability for the safe keeping of a mobile phone which will remain the responsibility of the student at all times. Only in exceptional circumstances (usually involving other breaches of our code of conduct) would the school investigate the theft or loss of a mobile phone.
- iii. Use of a mobile phone will lead to the application of proportionate sanctions, including temporary confiscation. All breaches of good conduct are considered on an individual basis taking into account the nature of the offence, its context and the prior behaviour history of the student concerned. The Headteacher or other member of the Senior Leadership Team will retain discretion in the application of sanctions depending on the nature of the individual situation considered. The procedures below outline responses to many common situations that may arise.

PROCEDURES

Common situations and typical responses – including sanctions.

1. A student is caught in possession of a phone.

The teacher will confiscate the phone which will be kept in safe keeping in the school office. The student will receive a warning – any further breaches would move sanctions to the next level. The student can collect the phone at the end of the day.

2. A student's phone rings during a lesson.

The teacher will confiscate the phone which will be kept in safe keeping in school office. The incident will be recorded in the student's planner. The student can collect the phone at the end of the day.

3. A student uses a phone (to speak or text) in school, without permission.

The teacher will confiscate the phone and record the event in the student's planner. The sanction process will be followed according to the rewards and sanctions practice in school.

4. Without authorisation, a student uses the phone to communicate with a parent or other person in response to a situation at school.

Typically, this might involve a call to a parent to complain about an incident in school. This is wholly unacceptable as it circumvents the school's clear procedures for dealing with any behaviour or other incident in school. It would often mean that the parent is contacted by an upset child and provided with a distorted or inappropriate interpretation of what has transpired – sometimes leading to an angry or misinformed response from the parent. The phone will be confiscated and can be collected by the parent at the end of school. The sanction process will be followed according to the rewards and sanctions practise in school.

Similarly, it is not permitted that students telephone home to inform parents that they are unwell and need to be collected from school. If a pupil is unwell and feel they need to go home, he/she should ask a member of staff to call from the school office.

5. A student records an unauthorised picture or video clip of a pupil.

The phone will be confiscated and the sanction process will be followed according to the rewards and sanctions practise in school. This will be dealt with severely.

Should it be discovered that the student has posted such images/video clips on the internet (for example, via YouTube) or has transferred them electronically to other digital devices then a fixed term exclusion will be considered. The reprimand will be even more severe if for example, investigations show the action to be malicious and/or part of a wider bullying or intimidation campaign or the behaviour has been repeated. The taking of photos or videoing of others without their expressed permission is illegal and aggrieved parties are within their legal rights to contact the police and report the incident.

6. A student records an unauthorised picture or video clip of a teacher or other member of staff.

A fixed term exclusion will be considered and parents will be asked to attend school to discuss methods of preventing further misuse and to collect the phone following confiscation. Should it be discovered that the student has posted such images/video clips on the internet (for example, via You Tube) or has transferred them electronically to other digital devices they would possibly face a more severe reprimand. For example, the action was investigated and considered to be repeated or malicious or that such images/clips were damaging to the good reputation or professional standing of the individual teacher and/or Hydesville Tower School. It should be noted that the member of staff concerned might take further independent action, perhaps following consultation with their professional association. The taking of photos or the videoing of others without their expressed permission is illegal and aggrieved parties are within their legal rights to contact the police and report the incident.

7. Inappropriate text messages, email or any other form of electronic communication are sent by a pupil (including messages of a threatening or bullying nature).

The context and nature of the messages sent will be crucial in determining the severity of the response. For example, if the messaging is repeated behaviour or part of a wider bullying campaign, this will be treated very seriously and the sanctions are likely to include a fixed term or even permanent exclusion (please refer to our Behaviour policy). As above, parents will typically be invited to school to collect the confiscated phone and to discuss ways of preventing similar unacceptable behaviour in the future.

At all times, the school will consider each set of circumstances on a case by case basis before determining a course of action or applying proportionate responses.

As with all policies at Hydesville Tower School, we welcome feedback from students and parents and are constantly striving to improve our procedures in order to ensure good order, student safety and happiness within our inclusive community.

Updated: April 2016
Review: March 2017