

Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2024

Dear Parents and Carers,

**RE: Mobile Devices**

Thank you for your continual support of the academy.

As you may be aware, there is new guidance around mobile phones in schools, directed by the Department for Education. The purpose of the guidance is to support schools in creating a mobile phone-free school environment.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mobile-phones-in-schools>

By the time students arrive at secondary school, 97% own a mobile phone. The use of mobile phones in schools can lead to distraction, disruption, increased safeguarding risks and exacerbate misbehaviour and bullying. Without the disruption mobile phones can cause, school staff can spend more time teaching and supporting students with their learning.

The impact of mobile phones in schools (DfE Statistics)

- 29% of secondary school pupils reported mobile phones being used without permission in most of their lessons.
- One in five children have experienced bullying online.
- Screen time can displace activities which have a positive impact on wellbeing such as socialising and exercise.

Safeguarding risks of mobile phone and unrestricted access to data include:

- Bullying
- Access to harmful content online
- Risk of online harm
- Falling victim to cybercrime
- Sharing personal information
- Youth produced imagery (sexting)
- Poor mental health

Mobile phones have already been prohibited or restricted in one in four countries worldwide, including France, The Netherlands and several Australian states and territories. These DfE restrictions on the use of mobile phones are not unique to schools in England.

The DfE have directed school leaders to develop and implement a policy to prohibit the use of mobile phones and other similar devices which reflects their school's individual contexts and needs. This will depend on several factors including the size of the school, and the age and needs of all pupils. Examples of successful approaches include:

- No mobile phones on the school premises
- Mobile phones handed into staff on arrival at school
- Mobile phones kept in secure location, which the pupil does not access throughout the school day
- Mobile phones are never used, seen or heard whilst at school

Therefore, the senior leadership team have discussed this in great length. We have taken into consideration our local community, and understand that we have students travelling distances on public transport and on foot to the academy. Therefore we have agreed to implement the **'Never used, seen or heard' guidance from the DfE.**

Therefore, students will keep possession of their mobile phones only on the strict condition that they are never used, seen or heard. Students still wishing to use the pouch system will be allowed to, and we strongly encourage this but the academy will not provide new pouches to students.

There are consequences for breaching our new mobile devices policy which are sufficient to act as an effective deterrent and these will be shared with students. We want to be clear and transparent to everyone. All mobile devices will be required to be switched off on entry to the academy and placed at the bottom of students school bag or in their trousers / shorts / culottes / coat / blazer pockets before entering the building. Mobile devices cannot be used, seen or heard until students leave the school reception green gate outside the main building.

Any student breaking the academy rules on 'Never used, seen or heard' will have the following sanctions;

- The mobile device will be confiscated until the end of the **next** day, **or** a parent/carer can collect the device before 5pm, on the same day from reception.
- Students refusing to hand in their mobile device will receive an external ½ day suspension.
- If the academy is unable to contact parents / carers to inform them of the suspension, the student will be placed in our Internal Suspension room until 3.30pm.
- Any student with a prolonged refusal/multiple uses of a phone device in a day will receive at least a 1 day external suspension.

The academy will make reasonable adjustments and adaptations for any student with medical conditions requiring access / use of their mobile device, please contact the SEN department if you feel this applies to your child.

By working effectively together, we will ensure that all of our students are safe and free from distractions during the school day. **We strongly suggest you do not send your child in with their mobile phone unless essential.** If you require to contact your child during the school day you do so by contacting the school office, either by emailing [office@bexhillacademy.org](mailto:office@bexhillacademy.org) or you can call 01424 730722, press 3 to speak to a member of staff and ask for Claire Cook for Year 7, Samantha Cheshire for Year 8, Gill Barrington-Smith for Year 9, Michele Wilkinson for Year 10 and Jackie Houlihan for Year 11.

The above updated policy will **start from Monday July 1<sup>st</sup> 2024** after the year 11's have successfully sat all their GCSE exams. It is important that our whole community is fully aware of the policy.

Thank you for your ongoing support of your child and the academy.

Kind regards



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