20th October, 2020

Dear Parent/carer(s),

Thank you very much for your time in helping us with our mobile phone surveys last term. Your opinion and views are important to us and after careful consideration and further student consultation, the College has decided to adopt a ‘mobile device free’ policy for our Y7-11 students during school hours from Monday 2nd November 2020. This is part of our ongoing efforts to ensure our students meet their academic potential, and to safeguard their emotional health and wellbeing. Y7 students have already been adhering to this policy since they started with us in September.

There is a growing and robust body of evidence that mobile device use by students in schools harms academic achievement and that the negative effect the distraction of a mobile phone has on students’ achievement reinforces insecure progress. It has become increasingly clear that unrestricted mobile device use is a risk to the mental health of the adolescent students we serve.

For example, a 2018 study (published in June 2019) by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development found that cyberbullying in English schools is significantly and profoundly more prevalent than in any other developed country. We have seen an escalation in the number of incidents of cyberbullying that we have had to deal with in recent years and even since our return, taking precious time away from the classroom for teachers.

You will be aware that our Government are still considering the ban, however we do not believe that we can or should wait for the problem to be addressed systemically, and feel we should take this step, as other schools in this country and governments and states across the world have done. Our policy is outlined in more detail on the enclosed document, but in short, and for clarity, our ‘mobile device free’ policy means that from Monday 2nd November 2020:

1. For Y11 students and below, mobile devices must not be used, seen, or heard

at any point anywhere on the college site.

1. We will have a week of no confiscations to give students and staff the opportunity to have positive conversations and reminders about the new policy.
2. From the week beginning 9th November if a student breaches this rule, without express permission in exceptional circumstances, mobile devices will be confiscated, within our covid safety guidelines.

We thank you in advance for your support and should be grateful if you would discuss these changes and reiterate your support with your child. We will communicate the changes to students through tutor time to ensure that all students are aware of the new policy starting after October half term.

Yours Sincerely,

Derrick Brett

(Principal

**Okehampton College mobile device policy**

Okehampton College is a ‘mobile device free school’, which means that for Y11 students and below, mobile device must not be used, seen, or heard at any point anywhere on the college site. (Students in Y12-13 may use mobile devices in The Wardhayes Campus only; devices must be out of sight and switched off in other areas of the college).

To this end we recommend that mobile devices are not brought into college by students. However, we understand that some parent/carers feel that it is necessary for their children to bring a mobile phone to college for contact purposes outside of school hours when their children are travelling to and from college. If this is the case, we recommend that only the least-expensive models and brands are used, and that they should be protected with passwords and marked for security. If a student chooses to bring a mobile device into college s/he does so at the owner’s own risk, and is expected to abide by the following rules which control the use of mobile devices:

1. Mobile devices may only be brought into the college so that students can contact parents on their way to and from school.
2. If a student does bring a mobile device into the college it must be switched off before the student comes on to the college site, kept switched off (i.e. powered off; not on silent) throughout the student’s time in college, and kept out of sight at all times. The mobile device must not be accessed and switched on again until the student has left the college premises at the end of the day. (Note thus that the policy also applies to extra-curricular and revision sessions after school.)
3. College Reception remains a vital and appropriate point of contact for parents/carers and can ensure children are reached quickly in the event of an emergency. Parents who need to pass messages to their children during the school day should telephone the college reception in the usual way and not try to contact their children directly by mobile. Students may access college telephones if they need to contact a parent/carer.
4. Any student found using a mobile device, with a phone visible or with a phone switched on, at any time on college premises, will have the phone confiscated, and receive 2 negative behaviour points. The mobile phone will be held in the college safe in Reception until the student collects the phone at the end of the college day. A second and any subsequent offence will result in the phone being confiscated with parent/carers being required to collect the mobile phone in person from the college at the end of the college day. Persistent mobile device use will result in consultation with parent/carer to put in appropriate strategies eg. hand in every morning; leave at home.
5. Students who bring a mobile device into college should make every effort to reduce the risk of theft during school hours. Pupils who carry mobile devices are advised to keep them well concealed.
6. If students bring mobile devices into college during any examination, it is their responsibility to follow the examination regulations with respect to mobile phones and electronic devices.
7. Any mobile device that is brought into school will be at the owner’s risk. The college accepts no responsibility for loss of, damage to, or cost incurred relating to mobile devices (including if they are confiscated). It will not always be possible for staff to investigate the loss of mobile devices.
8. Students will continue to be educated through the curriculum and pastoral programme about the safe use of mobile devices as part of the college’s E-safety policy.