

MOBILE PHONES

Although we recognise their convenience and value in an emergency, the use of mobile phones in school can create unnecessary and problematic situations. 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.

The implementation of our mobile phone policy will not cause any problems for the vast majority of Beechwood pupils who use their mobile phones sensibly. This policy is designed to ensure that potential issues involving mobile phones can be clearly identified and addressed, ensuring the benefits that mobile phones provide (such as increased safety) can continue to be enjoyed by our pupils.

Generally, problems with mobile phones fall into three categories – text, speech and images. “Texting” enables pupils 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. Camera and video phones combined with wireless technology enable pupils 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. Pupils 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.

We therefore require all pupils to be aware of and to follow these guidelines:

- ◆ Pupils in the **Preparatory School** may not bring mobile phones to School at any time.
 - ◆ In the **Senior School**, phones are permitted only under strict adherence to the following guidelines:
 - ◆ In **Boarding** handheld electronic devices are handed in to boarding staff in the evening prior to lights out.
- All mobile phones must be clearly marked with the pupil's name and, in the case of loss or unlikely theft, protected by a key code.

- Pupils should keep their phones in their locker (or secure draw/safe for boarding pupils) during the school day. Sixth formers may keep their phones with their other personal belongings.
- The school will not accept liability for the safe keeping of a mobile phone which will remain the responsibility of the pupil at all times. Only in exceptional circumstances (usually involving other breaches of our Behaviour policy/ Beechwood Code) would the school investigate the theft or loss of a mobile phone.
- In normal circumstances, mobile phones **may not be used** on School premises during the School working day. **A Beechwood School day begins at 8am and continues through until 6pm.**
- The school recognises the importance of emerging technologies present in modern mobile phones e.g. camera and video recording, internet access, MP3 and MP4 playback, blogging, etc. Teachers may wish to utilise these functions to aid teaching and learning and pupils may have the opportunity to use their mobile phones in the classroom. On these occasions pupils may use their mobile phones in the classroom when express permission has been given by the teacher. The use of personal mobile phones in one lesson for a specific purpose does not mean blanket usage is then acceptable.
- In exceptional circumstances mobile phones may be used during the lunch break for contacting parents to make arrangements for picking-up and other similar uses, but they may not be used in the school Refectory and must not be used for purely social purposes. Exceptional circumstances do not include the desire to discuss with parents or friends a problem encountered at School. If a pupil needs to use their phone they **must first seek** permission to do so.
- Clearly, text messaging between pupils is not allowed at any time during the school working day. Using filming or camera functions on phones to take photos of other pupils or staff is strictly prohibited and will result in sanctions. Downloading or sharing inappropriate content is prohibited.
- Similarly, mobile phones **may not be used** to make arrangements to be collected early from School in the event of illness. The School Nurse remains the only member of staff who should make such arrangements.
- Using mobile phones to bully and threaten other pupils is unacceptable. Cyber bullying will not be tolerated. In some cases it can constitute criminal behaviour. If the use of technology humiliates, embarrasses or causes offence it is unacceptable regardless of whether ‘consent’ was given.
- It is forbidden for pupils to “gang up” on another pupil and use their mobile phones to take videos and pictures of acts to denigrate and humiliate that pupil and then send the pictures to other pupils or upload it to a website for public viewing. This also includes using mobile phones to photograph or film any pupil or member of staff without their consent. It is a criminal offence to use a mobile phone to menace, harass or offend another person and almost all calls, text messages and emails can be traced.
- Mobile phones are not to be used or taken into changing rooms or toilets or used in any situation that may cause embarrassment or discomfort to their fellow pupils, staff or visitors to the school.
- Under JCQ regulations, mobile phones are banned from all examinations. Pupils **MUST** hand phones to invigilators before entering the exam hall. Any pupil found in possession of a mobile phone during an examination will have that paper disqualified. Such an incident may result in all other exam papers being disqualified.
- Any pupil who uses vulgar, derogatory, or obscene language while using a mobile phone will face disciplinary action.

- Pupils must ensure that files stored on their phones do not contain violent, degrading, racist or pornographic images. The transmission of such images is a criminal offence.
- Similarly, 'sexting' or 'youth produced sexual imagery' – which is the sending of personal sexual imagery - is also a reportable offence.
- Pupils with mobile phones may not engage in personal attacks, harass another person, or post private information about another person using SMS messages, taking/sending photos or objectionable images, and phone calls. Pupils using mobile phones to bully other pupils will face disciplinary action. (It should be noted that it is a criminal offence to use a mobile phone to menace, harass or offend another person. As such, the school may consider it appropriate to involve the police.)
- The School will confiscate a mobile phone from any pupil who disregards these guidelines for a minimum of **24 hours**. A pupil who has their phone removed on a second occasion will lose their phone for up to **48 hours** and their parents informed and who will be required to come in to School to collect it during this period. A phone confiscated on a Friday will not be returned until Monday.
- Other more serious sanctions can and will be applied as discretion demands.
- The School also reserves the right to confiscate mobile phones and to inspect their contents if it is suspected that they have been used for malicious, offensive or illegal purposes or to access extremist or inappropriate web content.
- Pupils are reminded about the Anti-Bullying Policy and the ICT Acceptable Use Policy which identify both safe use of technology and the concerns and serious issues that surround cyber-bullying.
- 'Be Safe' online training is provided to all pupils in Years 3 and above on an annual basis.

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