



St Cecilia's

R. C. High School

Mobile Phone Policy

March 2024

Introduction

At St Cecilia's RC High School, we continually aim to provide an environment that is calm, safe and free from distraction so that all pupils, whatever their background, can learn and thrive. One of the greatest challenges facing schools in today's society is the presence of mobile phones. An Ofcom report found that by the age of 12, **97% of pupils** own a mobile phone. A further survey from the DfE (National Behaviour Survey, 2023), found that one in three secondary school pupils report that mobile phones are used in most lessons without permission.

Mobile phones risk unnecessary distraction, disruption and diversion. One single incident which affects the entire lesson, diverting the teacher's attention and disrupting the learning for the whole class. At St Cecilia's, we must remove these distractions to enable all students to be fully present and engaged in the classroom.

Secondly, we must also remove them to keep them safe at school. The Office for National Statistics (2020) found that one in five children had experienced bullying online. By removing mobile phones from the school day, we can create a safe space where pupils are protected from the risks and dangers associated with social media and cyber-bullying, as well as the peer pressure and possible stigma associated with owning what are often expensive devices. Without mobile phone, we believe that students can spend more time staying active and socialising face to face with their peers and develop social skills needed to thrive in life after school.

Our pupils are growing up in an increasingly complex world, spending a large majority of their lives online. Whilst there are positives and exciting opportunities, there are also challenges, risks and dangers. By prohibiting mobile phones, we aim to create a safe and calm school community, free from distraction so all pupils can receive the education they deserve.

Conditions of the policy

Mobile phones and other smart devices are never to be used, seen or heard on the school site during the school day, 8:45am-3:15pm.

Many parents/guardians want their children to have a mobile phone with them for their safety when travelling to and from school. We fully understand this and want our students to feel safe when travelling to and from school.

Therefore, pupils may travel to and from school with their phone on.

Before the start of the school day, **they must switch their phone off and any other smart device.**

Whilst on the school site during the school day, the **mobile phone/smart device must remain off at all times.**

Mobile phones (including Smart Watches and other similar devices) are **not permitted in any examination**.

Only when students have left the school site, are they allowed to turn their phone/smart device on.

If a mobile is used, seen or heard, it will be confiscated.

The role of staff

All staff will consistently enforce the school's policy on the use of mobile phones.

The role of parents

Parents have an important role in supporting the school's policy on prohibiting the use of mobile phones and we would encourage parents to reinforce and discuss the policy at home as appropriate, including the risks associated with mobile phone use and the benefits of a mobile phone-free environment.

Should parents need to contact their child during the school day, they should be directed to the school office, where messages can be relayed and facilitating contact if needed.

Where parents have questions or concerns, staff will aim to address these in a timely manner and clearly communicate the reasons for prohibiting the use of mobile phones.

The use of sanctions

Schools can use a range of sanctions for breaching the mobile phone policy. Schools have the power to confiscate mobile phones or similar devices as a disciplinary penalty. The law protects staff from liability in any proceedings brought against them for any loss or damage to items they have confiscated as a sanction, providing they have acted lawfully.

If a pupil's mobile phone is **used, seen or heard**, on school premises during the school day, they will have it confiscated and the parents/guardians will be required to collect it from reception.

If a pupil repeatedly has their phone confiscated, there may other sanctions in line with the school's behaviour policy which will be at the discretion of the Headteacher.

On all occasions the incident will be recorded on SIMS/Edulink and a message will be sent to parents.

If a pupil's phone cannot be seen but nevertheless is heard to ring or emit a text message alert sound whilst on school premises a member of staff will require the pupil to hand over the mobile phone for confiscation, as above.

Pupils are not permitted to ring/text home without permission, no matter the reason.

If a pupil is seen using a mobile phone, then in addition to having the phone confiscated they will be disciplined as appropriate. Depending on the nature of the use, this may range from detention to withdrawal from lessons. In serious cases, such as using the phone to film in circumstances where it amounts to sexual misconduct or harassment of staff or pupils, the sanction may extend to exclusion from school and/or the involvement of the police.

The only exception to the prohibition of use of a mobile phone on school premises would be if a member of staff gives a student express permission to use his or her phone at a particular time and location, for example to allow a recording during a foreign language lesson for revision purposes.

If a confiscated phone awaiting collection by a parent or other adult has the pupil's bus pass stored on it, school will arrange for the pupil to get the bus home as normal. It will then be the parents' responsibility to get the pupil to school the next day.

Searching pupils

Headteachers, or staff they authorise, have a statutory power to search a pupil or their possessions where they have reasonable grounds to suspect that the pupil is in possession of a prohibited item as set out in legislation or any item identified in the school rules as an item that may be searched for. Mobile phones and similar smart devices are items that may be searched for in line with our school behaviour and uniform policy.

Adaptations and reasonable adjustments

Whilst we prohibit the use of mobile phones throughout the school day to reduce distraction and disruption, we will also listen and consider any adjustments that may be needed in exceptional circumstances to support specific pupils. For example, a pupil with a disability or medical condition may need to access their mobile phone at some point during the school day due to the nature of their disability or medical condition. For example, pupils with diabetes might use continuous glucose monitoring with a sensor linked to their mobile phone to monitor blood sugar levels. Whilst we will be flexible for some individual pupils, this does not mean that these pupils will be exempt from all restrictions on the use of their mobile phone. We will plan and establish practices which enable pupils to use their mobile phone for a specific purpose at specific times and locations, for example in the medical room, supervised by a member of staff.

The use of mobile phones outside the school day

We are aware that social issues, including cyber-bullying can take place outside of the school day which can affect school attendance, mental health and well-being, friendship fall outs. Please see more information about our expectations of pupil conduct whilst online in our anti-bullying policy. Pupils may receive sanctions in line the behaviour policy for their online activity.