



St Cecilia's

R.C. HIGH SCHOOL



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March 2024

Dear Parents and Carers

Re: Changes to the school mobile phone policy

You may have heard that the Government has recently updated its guidance on the use of mobile phones in school - it is now prohibited for children to use their personal mobile phones in school. At St Cecilia's RC High School, we accept and understand that personal mobile phones and tablets are often given to pupils by their parents to ensure their safety and personal security, whilst pupils may wish to bring their personal devices to school for a variety of other reasons.

As a school, we understand the benefits such devices offer, as well as how the use of mobile phones in school can sometimes jeopardise the learning environment as well as the safety and welfare of students whilst in school. We must therefore strike a balance between ensuring personal safety and wellbeing and maintaining an appropriate learning environment for our pupils.

Changes to the policy and responsibilities

Pupils

Pupils should not use their mobile phone or other personal electronic devices during the school day. It is important that all pupils are clear on the school's policy on prohibiting the use of mobile phones in the school, and the consequences and sanctions for not following it.

Pupils may travel to and from school with their mobile phone.

Before entering the school building, students must turn their phones off completely (as opposed to leaving their phone on, on silent mode)

They are then permitted to turn their phone back on at the end of the school day when they have left the building.

Parents

As partners in your child's education, you have an important role in supporting the school's policy on prohibiting the use of mobile phones in school. We would appreciate your support in discussing and reinforcing any policy changes at home, including the risks associated with mobile phone use and the benefits of a mobile phone-free environment. If you need to contact your child during the school day, you should contact the school office, where staff will relay any messages and facilitate contact.

DIocese of  SALFORD

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Staff

Pupils will be taught the risks that are associated with the use of mobile phones, both in school and more broadly, to ensure they understand the decision being taken by the school to prohibit the use of mobile phones throughout the school day.

Sanctions

Mobile phones should not be seen, used or heard during the school day.

If a mobile phone is seen, used or heard, it will be confiscated, and parents/carers will be required to collect it from reception.

Mobile phone use: facts and figures of children

By the age of 12, 97% of children own a mobile phone. (Ofcom)

The majority of 8-11-year-olds (63%) use social media and messaging apps. This rises to 93% for children between 12 and 15 years old. (Ofcom)

29% of secondary school pupils (rising to 40% for KS4 pupils) reported mobile phones being used without permission in most of their lessons. (The National Behaviour Survey (2021-2022))

Screen time can displace positive activities. (Royal College Paediatrics and Child Health; 2019)

One in five children have experienced bullying online. (Office of National Statistics; 2020)

What can parents do to help protect children online?

As parents, you play an essential role in protecting your children online and there are lots of ways you can help to minimise the risks and increase awareness of the online world. To help you start discussing some of the issues regarding mobile phone use and the internet, we have listed some of the ways you can do this below:

Talk to your children about why it is important to stay safe online.

Only give your children devices or access to devices that you feel comfortable with, and not as a result of peer-pressure deriving from their classmates and/or friends who are also using those devices.

Discuss rules for being online and draw them up together, including which sites, games, etc., are acceptable. If certain games are off-limits, try to explain why – for example, because of excessive violence. If your child uses online gaming, consider setting rules such as only talking to others in the same age range and having the conversation on speaker, rather than headphones, so you can monitor it.

Discuss what information should be private and what is ok to share; for example, addresses and names. Names should never be given out to strangers online, as this could allow them to identify where your child goes to school or lives.

Set parental controls – do this as a dialogue with your child so that they are aware of what they are not allowed to view; however, do not rely on parental controls on devices, as they are not always 100 percent effective, and many children know how to bypass them.

Make sure your child knows how to report or ‘block’ unsuitable content, messages or people online – show them how to block on the websites or games they frequently use and explain that they can always tell you, a teacher or another adult if they experience anything which makes them feel uncomfortable.

Here are some other resources you can use to help you protect your children online:

- NSPCC – ‘Talking to your child about online safety’ (<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/talking-child-online-safety/>)
- Childnet – ‘Have a conversation’ (<https://www.childnet.com/parents-and-carers/have-a-conversation/>)

Next steps

The new policy will be on the school’s website.

Staff will be organising lessons/assemblies to discuss the legislative changes with pupils and discuss the use of mobile phones in school.

As always, we thank you for your continued support. You are invited to contact the school with any questions or concerns regarding the new guidance and how the school intends to implement it.

Yours sincerely



Mrs H Hall

Headteacher