

St Mary's Catholic High School, Leyland

Responsible use of Modern Media: Mobile Phones, Smart Watches & Social Networking Policy



Adjusted: April 2018

To be reviewed: Spring 2020



Purpose and reasons for this policy

This policy acknowledges the benefits to both pupils and parents of having a mobile phone available whilst travelling to and from school and the role that online social networking plays in modern society. The policy is the school's considered response to known incidents in which the dignity of individuals has been compromised by the actions of other pupils. The policy is reasonable in supporting parents in their need to safeguard their children travelling to and from school, but it is also driven by the need to safeguard all pupils whilst in school and to guard against the selfish and insensitive actions of a small minority out of school.

Issues of concern

- Nearly all mobile phones now have cameras. We are only too aware of incidents reported in the media where pupils have suffered the indignity of having indecent photos taken of him against their will and these photos passed via picture messaging to others.
- The development of Internet accessible smart phones makes this sad possibility a more dangerous prospect.
- The school does not allow valuables of any nature into school because of the risk of children losing such items. The school quite rightly expects staff to focus on the learning and wellbeing of the pupils in our care - not on looking for misplaced items that should not have been brought into school in the first place.

Safety travelling to and from school

Smart watches **are** banned from school. Mobile phones **are not** banned from school as we accept that some students and parents see the possession of mobile phones as an aid to safety and security. **However...** if a student does bring a mobile phone to school it must be **switched off during the day**, be kept out of sight and not used for any reason on school premises or sports fixtures organised off the premises, unless the student has the express agreement of a member of staff and uses it under their supervision. This means that pupils

must not have their phones visible or audible after they enter the school gates and until they leave by the school gates.

The school will not accept liability to the theft, damage or loss of a mobile phone (or smart watch if brought in) and the student has to accept full responsibility for it at all times.

Residential educational visits

As a result of several of the issues cited above, the school does not allow mobile phones or smart watches on residential visits. Other electronic devices that allow communication with others and may be connected online e.g. I Pods, are acceptable on the understanding that they are not used as a communication device, to upload data (including photographs) or as a camera in anything but public areas. Arrangements for communication with the school party will be explained to parents at the parents' meetings that are arranged prior to all residential visits.

Consequences

Our policy acknowledges this and seeks to demonstrate to pupils that persistent irresponsible use of their phone will carry increasingly firm penalties. Regrettably some pupils are repeat offenders. If a pupil is seen with their mobile phone (not necessarily using it) or it is audible the following consequences will occur:

1. The phone (or smart watch) will be confiscated by the member of staff and sent down to the main office; this confiscation will be recorded on SIMS. Parents will be informed about the confiscation.
2. A member of the office staff will then securely store the confiscated phone (or smart watch). **Such a confiscation is in line with Section 91 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006**, which enables a member of staff to confiscate, retain or dispose of a pupil's property as a disciplinary penalty, where reasonable to do so.

Depending on whether this is a first, second or third (etc.) offence, the following sanctions will be applied. **IN EACH CASE, THE CONFISCATED PHONE (OR SMART WATCH) HAS TO BE COLLECTED BY A PARENT/CARER:**

First offence: Lost merit.

Second offence: Lost merit, 1-hour Senior Leadership Team detention (usually Thursday).

Third offence: Lost merit, 2-hour Senior Leadership Team detention (usually Friday).

Fourth offence: Lost merit, 2-day attendance in our Inclusion Facility.

Fifth offence: Fixed term exclusion (FTE). Length of exclusion determined by the overall record of the pupil and at the discretion of the Headteacher.

More than 5 offences: This is persistent disobedience and represents strong evidence that the pupil is not prepared to adjust their actions. At the various points in this escalation, the easy collective decision between pupil and their family could be that the phone is not taken to school. In these cases, whilst it may be appropriate to issue a longer FTE, the Headteacher reserves the right to permanently exclude.

Searches

As a part of the school's behaviour policy, the Governors have decided that mobile phones (& smart watches) or any item capable of taking a photographic image / recording or connecting to the internet are items which may be searched for if it is considered that there has been misuse.

Statutory guidance for dealing with electronic devices

Staff confiscating such items should consult a member of the SLT if they are concerned about any data stored on such devices. Data or files can be examined by a member of the SLT if there is a good reason to do so. Following such an examination, any offending files or data may be erased if the member of SLT thinks there is good reason to do so or may be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Leader in school if there are any concerns. The member of SLT must have regard to the following guidance issued by the Secretary of State when determining what a "good reason" is for examining or erasing the contents of an electronic device:

In determining a 'good reason' to examine or erase the data or files the staff member must reasonably suspect that the data or file on the device in question has been, or could be, used to cause harm, to disrupt teaching or break the school rules.

If inappropriate material is found on the device it is up to the member of the SLT to decide whether they should delete that material, retain it as evidence (of a criminal offence or a breach of school discipline) or whether the material is of such seriousness that it requires the involvement of the police and /or the Designated Safeguarding Leader in school.

Conclusion

The school accepts that having a mobile phone (or smart watch) confiscated can cause some inconvenience. Parents often suggest that their son / daughter will be unable to go out because they are not allowed to without his / her phone. Parents are asked to consider such a response in the light of the real and serious safeguarding issues cited above. As a school, we have provided the means by which pupils can bring mobile phones to school. We have also, by means of this policy, and through assemblies with all year groups, communicated our very clear expectations with regard to mobile phones and other electronic devices along with the consequences of a lack of cooperation. If a pupil needs to contact parents urgently then they can approach a member of the Pastoral Team who have telephones which pupils may use. Alternatively, the school office can contact home in emergencies.

Social networking

The school acknowledges that the use of social media sites can be a force for good in the modern world; indeed, the school has its own Twitter account and its own App. However, the proliferation in use of such sites has also, when abused, caused great harm to relationships within and beyond school and to individual members of our school community. It would be impossible to set out all possible abuses herein but the following four points are offered as general guidance as to what should **not** form a part of any contribution to a social networking site:

- Any form of bullying;
- Inappropriate comments or language;
- Ridicule of individuals or groups of people ~ pupils or families;
- Any comments about members of staff. Should pupils become aware of such abuse they should report it to a member of staff. Pupils should not contribute to any such 'discussions' in support of others, no matter how well intentioned ~ doing so may well lead to sanctions being applied.

Support for Parents and Pupils

The **Governors** of St Mary's Catholic High School want to reassure pupils and their families that they can expect support from the school if they become victims of such abuse, but that they should also be aware of the consequences when they are the perpetrators of such abuse.

The school specifically protects:

- ***The rights of pupils and staff to use modern media without fear of embarrassment or bullying;***
- ***The right of school staff not to be subjected to harassment at any time in their professional or private lives.***

Furthermore, Teachers have a statutory power to discipline pupils for misbehaving outside of the school premises. Section 89(5) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 gives Head Teachers a specific statutory power to regulate pupils' behaviour in these circumstances "to such extent as is reasonable."

The school will discipline a pupil for misbehaviour at any time that:

- **Could have repercussions for the orderly running of the school;**
- **Poses a threat to another pupil or member of the public;**
- **Could adversely affect the reputation of the school.**

The behaviour of pupils outside school e.g. inappropriate use of social networking sites can be considered as grounds for exclusion. This will be a matter of judgement for the Headteacher. Pupils are made aware of the advantages and potential abuse of social media sites through a combination of ICT and PSHCE lessons and assemblies. We also acknowledge that for parents, just 'keeping-up' with technology can be a challenge, and so the school website has an e-safety section in which advice and links can be found covering a wide range of issues and media sites.

The Law

The UK's laws to protect children are robust and respected across the world. But it is vital to remain responsive to changes and developments. This is particularly relevant to changes in technology and communications, which along with bringing major benefits to society, have created possible safeguarding issues for pupils.

Legislation in England and Wales prohibits obscene publications, performances, and photographs. This covers the taking, making, distribution, showing or possession with a view to distributing any indecent image of a child.

Section 127 of the Communications Act 2003 makes it an offence to send a message by means of a public electronic communications network (including the internet) if its content is grossly offensive, indecent, obscene or menacing.

Individuals can be prosecuted for such offences and if found guilty can attract a prison sentence and a possible registration on the sex offenders register.

At St Mary's Catholic High School, we work in close partnership with the police and other agencies to keep our pupils safe.