

THE AVON VALLEY SCHOOL

STUDENT USE OF MOBILE PHONES POLICY

Date of Policy: September 2024

Date of next review: September 2026

Who the review will involve: Headteacher, Governors, Senior Leadership team, Staff

Senior member of staff responsible for overseeing that this policy is implemented and regularly reviewed: Headteacher



PURPOSE

The widespread ownership of mobile phones among young people requires that school administrators, teachers, students, parents and carers take steps to ensure that mobile phones are used responsibly at school. The new generation of smart phones now include many different functions including easy access to the internet, cameras, instant messaging and various social media sites.

This Acceptable Use 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 students. Bullying using a mobile phone represents a new challenge for schools to manage and it is important that parents and students realise and understand that the misuse of mobile phones in this way will NOT be tolerated.

The Avon Valley School has established the following Acceptable Use Policy for mobile phones that provides teachers, students, parents and carers with guidelines and instructions for the appropriate use of mobile phones during school hours.

The Acceptable Use Policy for mobile phones also applies to students during school trips, and extra-curricular activities both on the school site and off-site.

RATIONALE

The Avon Valley School recognises that personal communication through mobile technologies is an accepted part of everyday life but that such technologies need to be used well.

PERSONAL SAFETY AND SECURITY

Our school accepts that parents/carers give their children mobile phones to protect them from everyday risks involving personal security and safety. It is acknowledged that providing a child with a mobile phone gives parents reassurance that they can contact their child if they need to speak to them urgently.

RESPONSIBILITY

It is the responsibility of students who bring mobile phones to school to abide by the guidelines outlined in this document.

The decision to provide a mobile phone to their children should be made by parents or carers. It is the responsibility of parents/carers to understand the capabilities of the phone and the potential use/misuse of those capabilities.

Parents/carers should be aware if their child takes a mobile phone to school. It is assumed household insurance will provide the required cover in the event of loss or damage. The school cannot accept responsibility for any loss, damage or costs incurred due to its use.

Parents/carers are reminded that in cases of emergency, the school office remains a vital and appropriate point of contact and can ensure your child is reached quickly and assisted in any relevant way. Passing on messages through school reception also reduces the likelihood of disrupting lessons inadvertently.

ACCEPTABLE USES

Mobile phones should be **switched off and kept out of sight** whilst students are anywhere on the school site. This includes before school, break time and lunchtime, inside the school building and outside of the school building.

Parents/carers are requested that in cases of emergency they contact the school first so we are aware of any potential issue and may make the necessary arrangements.

Students should protect their phone numbers by only giving them to close friends. This can help protect the student's number from falling into the wrong hands and guard against the receipt of insulting, threatening or unpleasant voice, text and picture messages.

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. In the future teachers may wish to utilise these functions to aid teaching and learning and students may have the opportunity to use their mobile phones in the classroom. On these occasions students 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.

UNACCEPTABLE USES

Unless express permission is granted, mobile phones should not be used to make calls, send SMS messages, surf the internet, take photos or use any other application during school lessons and other educational activities, such as assemblies.

Mobile phones must not disrupt classroom lessons with ring tones, music or beeping. They should be turned off during lesson times. The following are examples of misuse but are not exclusive.

'Misuse' will be at the discretion of the Headteacher:

- the deliberate engineering of situations where people's reactions are filmed or photographed in order to humiliate, embarrass and intimidate by publishing to a wider audience such as on Facebook or YouTube
- bullying by text, image and email messaging
- the use of a mobile phone for 'sexting' (the deliberate taking and sending of provocative images or text messages)
- pupils posting material on social network sites with no thought to the risks to their personal reputation and sometimes with the deliberate intention of causing harm to others
- making disrespectful comments, misrepresenting events or making defamatory remarks about teachers or other pupils
- general disruption to learning caused by pupils accessing phones in lessons
- pupils phoning parents immediately following an incident so that the ability of staff to deal with an incident is compromised
- publishing photographs of vulnerable pupils, who may be on a child protection plan, where this may put them at additional risk.
- using mobile phones to photograph or film any student or member of staff without their consent. In the event that this happens the student will be asked and expected to delete those images.

Students 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.

Dealing with such breaches of misuse will be in accordance with the school's behaviour policy. Where it is deemed necessary to examine the contents of a mobile phone this will be done by a designated member of staff. This action will be properly recorded in case it later becomes evidence of criminal activity. The record will include the time, who was present and what, if anything, was found.

Students and their parents should be very clear that the school is within its rights to confiscate the phone where the guidelines have been breached. The school will ensure that confiscated equipment is stored in such a way that it is returned to the correct person. The phone will then be returned to the student at the end of the school day. Persistent breaking of the school mobile phone policy may result in further sanctions.

Using mobile phones to bully and threaten other students is unacceptable. Cyber bullying will not be tolerated. In some cases, it can constitute criminal behaviour.

CONFISCATION OF MOBILE DEVICE

Unless given specific permission, mobile phones should, under no circumstances be seen or heard anywhere on the school site. The same rule applies for headphones and other electronic communication devices.

If a mobile device is seen or heard it will be confiscated by a member of staff and placed in a secure location. It can be collected at the end of the day.

If a student repeatedly infringes the rules and has their phone confiscated, then parents / carers will be asked to collect the device at the end of the school day at a time determined by the school.

THEFT OR DAMAGE

Students should mark their mobile phone clearly with their names.

Students who bring a mobile phone to school should leave it locked away in their locker/bag when they arrive. To reduce the risk of theft during school hours, students who carry mobile phones are advised to keep them well concealed and not 'advertise' they have them.

The school accepts no responsibility for replacing lost, stolen or damaged mobile phones. Additionally, the school accepts no responsibility for students who lose or have their mobile phones stolen while travelling to and from school.

It is strongly advised that students use passwords/pin numbers to ensure that unauthorised phone calls cannot be made on their phones (e.g. by other students, or if stolen). Students must keep their password/pin numbers confidential. Mobile phones and/or passwords may not be shared.

INAPPROPRIATE CONDUCT

Mobile phones and smart watches are banned from all examinations. Students are expected to leave their mobile phones and/or smartwatch with student services which will be returned after the exam., Any student 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.

SANCTIONS

Students who infringe the rules set out in this document will have their phone confiscated by teachers. If the phone is being used inappropriately the student must give it to a teacher if requested.

If a phone is repeatedly confiscated, parents will be notified and can collect the phone at the end of the day from the school safe. The incident will be documented.

As set out in the previous section, failure to heed the rules set out in this document may result in an alleged incident – of a serious nature - being referred to the police for investigation. In such cases, the parent or carer would be notified immediately.

REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed bi-annually.