



Monday 18th March 2024

## Mobile Phone Use in School

Dear Families,

Recently, you may have heard or seen headlines regarding the Government banning mobile phones in schools. It is important to highlight that, despite some misleading headlines, this is non-statutory guidance, and it remains for school leadership teams to decide their approach to mobile phone use in school.

It is my view that mobile phones are a major part of everyday life. Mobile phones not only impact how we live, but the whole nature of how we work has changed because of mobile phones. I feel this will only increase as mobile phone technology develops further. Therefore, our duty as educators should not be to ban something that is so central, but instead help students develop the skills to use them safely, appropriately and effectively.

Therefore, for this reason, alongside the safety benefits of parents/carers being able to contact their children should they need to before or after school, we will not be banning mobile phones at St Thomas More. However, we will continue to have set rules in place for their use and request your support with this.

Firstly, we ask you to support us by ensuring parental controls are set up on all student devices, so they do not have access to unrestricted networks at any time. Most social media apps enforce an age of 13 to use with the exception of WhatsApp, which is for users aged 16 and above. If you need to set up parental controls, support is available from all mobile network providers.

Secondly, it is made clear to all students that the same standards of behaviour are expected online as they are with face-to-face interactions (offline), where everyone in our school community should be treated with kindness, respect and dignity. This is carried out as part of our commitment to E-safety by students consenting to our Acceptable Use Policy every time they log on to a computer in school, which is further emphasised in our Wider Curriculum Programme and termly assemblies.

Inappropriate online behaviour including bullying, child-on-child abuse, the use of inappropriate language, the soliciting and sharing of nude or semi-nude images and videos and sexual harassment, will be addressed in accordance with the same principles as offline behaviour. This will include following the child protection policy and speaking to the Designated Safeguarding Lead when an incident raises a safeguarding concern.



Any cases of cyberbullying, sexting or other inappropriate on-line behaviour will be dealt with appropriately, usually involving parents and, if necessary, the police.

Finally, I'd like to stress the rules around the use of phones on school grounds. **During lessons or pastoral time students are asked to place their mobile phones out of sight and on silent, unless they are being used for learning directed by their teacher.**

If a member of staff has an issue with students being on their mobile phone, they may issue an appropriate sanction. **If a student still refuses to place their phone away, their phone may be confiscated and will be stored for safekeeping until the end of the school day.**

For students who have had their phone removed several times, parents may be notified and invited to school to discuss this. In extreme cases of defiance, a student may be suspended, or not allowed to have their phone with them in school.

Therefore, to be clear, our policy states that students should have their phones stored out of sight and on silent during the school day unless directed otherwise by their teachers. Exceptions to this are made for Year 11 students and 6th formers during break time in the canteen.

I hope I can count on your support in relation to our approach to mobile phone use which we consider appropriate and proportionate given the age profile of our students and the many benefits they offer.

Yours faithfully

Mrs J Turner  
Head Teacher