



Diocese of St. Albans



23rd November 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

Mobile phones in school

We all understand the safety benefits that mobile phones bring to young people. I think we also understand the drawbacks. When we give our children this piece of technology, worth hundreds of pounds, we also give them significant power that they must be trained to use appropriately. If your child has a smart phone, please also train them to understand their responsibility in the appropriate use of it. Parents/carers are usually the purchaser of the equipment and the line rental and it is they who are responsible for how that is used. To help you with that, I attach links for you to read:

1. For your child: [Childline](#)
2. For you: [Safer Internet Advice](#)

As you are no doubt aware we have a 'no phones' policy in school and that has been in place, unchanged, for many years. The only small change has been that, since September, we have not allowed lockers to be used and as a consequence we currently allow students to carry their phones on them. The policy has been temporarily adjusted to reflect this and can be found here: [SMHS Mobile phone policy](#). **The phones are still not allowed to be used or seen around the school site (inside or out) at any point, for any reason.**

Because of this consistency, the vast majority of students do not have their phones out during the day, and the vast majority of parents/carers accept it when we follow the policy. Despite this consistency, I have found myself being challenged by a few parents/carers asking for their child's phone back, following a confiscation that is **in line with our policy**.

For this reason, I am writing to remind you that, if your child brings a phone in to school they must

1. Turn it off and put it in their bag or blazer as they enter the school grounds;
2. Not get the phone out at any point, **for any reason**, during the school day;
3. Expect to get it confiscated as per our policy if they do this.

I would also like to remind parents/carers that

1. You should read, and be familiar with, our Mobile Phone Policy (as you should be with all our policies). You sign up to this when you send your child to St Mary's School;
2. We will not break our own policy and return phones early if they are confiscated **for any reason**. If your child's phone is confiscated, please do not contact us asking us for it to be returned early;
3. You should not text or call your child on their mobile during the school day. If you need to get hold of them, please contact reception and we will help you manage that;
4. You should not encourage them to use their phone by responding to their calls and texts during the school day. Again, please contact reception to get hold of your child.

WE BELIEVE EVERYONE IS EQUAL: EVERYONE DESERVES THE BEST

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Headteacher: Mr Nicholas Simms B.Sc. (Hons), NPQH

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Mobile phones to/from school

Having experienced the joy of in-ear music on a Sony Walkman as a teenager in the 1980s, I fully understand why teenagers want to listen to their music on earphones. However, on a journey outside the home this comes with risks: students cannot hear what is going on around them and they are not as focused on other pedestrians and traffic; criminals can easily see who has a mobile phone, making theft easier. Please, please, *please* encourage your son/daughter **not** to use their mobile phone, or even take it out and carry it visibly, on the way to/from school.

Mobile phones at home

Please monitor your children's use of their mobile phone and other online devices (iPads, Chromebooks and other tablets, Playstations etc.). The links shared at the start of this letter should really help with that. All too often we are asked to investigate issues that occur online in the evenings and at weekends. It is the responsibility of the family to ensure that their children behave appropriately to others, and stay safe, whilst online. If your child is a victim in this way, please screenshot any evidence, block the abuser and contact the police using 101 – we have no jurisdiction over people's devices and network usage and whilst we do not condone bullying in any form, it is often nearly impossible to investigate these issues.

As always I am appreciative of your support and the vast majority of you, I know, fully support and endorse our policies, understanding that they are there for the protection of all the people in our community.

Yours faithfully



Nicholas Simms
Headteacher

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