

30 April 2025

Dear Parents and Carers,

Re: Mobile Phone Procedure

In March I wrote to all parents to undertake a parent survey on our current mobile phone procedure. Alongside this I also undertook a student survey and a staff survey.

We know that parents are as concerned with students being able to take a 'digital break' from their phones, as are many students. The school is supportive of this. Some of the findings from the surveys that we undertook included that:

- 87% of parents were concerned about their child accessing inappropriate content.
- 88% of parents were opposed to students having access to phones throughout the school day (in an emergency your child can be contact through the school office).
- 30% of students spent over 4 hours a day on their phone with 7% spending over 6 hours a day on their phone.
- 35% of students admitted they would like to spend less time on their phone over the course of a week.
- One in five of students wanted 'stricter rules' on mobile phones.

All this links with the recent increasing awareness and public discussion regarding the potential harmful effects of smartphones on young people's mental, physical, and academic well-being. A growing body of evidence links smartphone use to several serious harms and safeguarding risks, including:

- Poor mental health, such as anxiety, depression, and loneliness;
- Difficulty with attention, concentration, and social isolation;
- Sleep deprivation;
- Excessive social comparison;
- Exposure to inappropriate content including violent and pornographic material;
- Addictive behaviours that children struggle to manage;
- Reduced engagement in real-world activities and relationships (research suggests that the average 12-year-old spends four hours per day on their smartphone).

Consequently, at St Andrew students will no longer be allowed to have smart phones on site from September 2025 for year groups 7 to 11. If any students do have a smart phone in their possession, it will be confiscated and returned to a responsible adult five school days after it has been confiscated.

The procedure is in line with all Barnet schools.

We know that parents wish to communicate with their child as they travel to and from school. Brick phones will be allowed on site, however, must be turned off and kept in their bags until students have left the school gates. Should a brick phone be left on, be used inside the school gates, or not in a child's bag it will be confiscated and returned to a responsible adult five school days after is has been confiscated. [A range of brick phones, some with tracking facilities, are listed here.](#)

In response to these concerns, there is growing support among parents for delaying smartphone ownership and we hope that this change in procedure will support parents and give students the much-needed break we know they need and many want.

It is a common misconception that children need a smartphone for secondary school, but this is not the case. We understand parents' concerns about their children's safety and the desire for communication outside school hours. Providing a simple mobile phone without internet access can effectively meet this need, helping your child avoid many smartphone-related risks. Various 'tracking devices' are also available which do not require a smartphone and may be of interest to you.

Homework is set on an online platform so students will need some access to the internet to check this, but this can be achieved through a desktop/laptop/tablet at home or through some access to a parent's smartphone.

Some homework may involve online platforms and so again students will need access to a device that can be connected to the internet, but we would generally recommend that independent work is better done on a larger screen in any event. Each day we run homework clubs where students can access the internet on computer screens.

As you would expect, we educate students on smartphone use, and online safety, through PSHE lessons, enrichment days, assemblies and tutor times throughout their time at the school.

Yours sincerely,

Mr C Martin

Headteacher