



2<sup>nd</sup> October 2023

Dear Parent and Carers

## Use of Mobile Phones In and Away from School

I am very aware that mobile phones have become part of everyday life for many of our young people. At their best, they bring information and communication quickly into their hands and can keep them safe whilst they grow with their independence. However, there are instances where the ownership of a phone can place young people at potential serious risk and certainly create anxiety and upset in their lives.

I have chosen to write because already this term our pastoral team seem to be spending a significant amount of time sorting out issues to do with students on social media, often which occur well away from our school during the evenings and at weekends when the students are not in our care. These issues are often inappropriate in their manner in that students are writing things that they certainly would not say if they were meeting someone face to face. For our part, through their education with us, we have built into our curriculum and assembly programme details around students keeping themselves safe online including locking down functions on their phones and the fact that through social media they have to be very careful what they post and what they say about others.

During our school day, a real focus has been to ensure the very best climate for learning so that students are fully prepared for lessons and any distraction is eliminated. To support this, we took the decision some time ago not to allow the use of mobile phones within school by students in Years 7 to 11. I know at least one secondary school within a few miles of Chew Valley who have a set procedure where every mobile phone has to be handed in to the relevant tutor in the morning and returned in the evening. They are stored in pouches which block reception so they cannot ring during the school day. We have taken a different route very much couched within our value of building mutual respect with our students.

Within this context could I reiterate our policy to you below:

- Firstly if mobile phones are with students they should be **'off and away'** during our school day; any phone seen or heard will be confiscated. The restriction is in place at all times while students are in the grounds of the school building from the **start of the day when our morning bell goes up until the end of the day bell at 3.20pm**. We are fully aware that students may wish to catch up with messages from home at the end of the day and so long as they are out of the buildings moving towards the front of the school then is certainly acceptable.
- Secondly therefore if there is an emergency, then a parent can contact the school office and we will make sure that any message gets through to your child. In the same manner if a student needs to contact home then by visiting Student Services we are able to support them in contacting you.

On the first occasion when a mobile phone is seen, it will be confiscated from the student in question and then returned by collection from Student Services at the end of that day. On subsequent occasions, the phone will need to be handed into Student Services for a number of days each morning and collected in the evening.

If I could ask you to support us then we can focus on learning and enabling our students to build positive friendships. We know we are working in partnership in this area and therefore we are offering a number of sessions where parents and carers can come and discuss mobile phone/internet usage with us. The first of these will be during the **Tutor Evening on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> October** (details of the Tutor Evening are being published separately). The second opportunity will be a **Staying Safe Online Workshop for Parents and Carers** of all years on the evening of **Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> November** during the first week back after half term **starting at 7pm** in the **School Library**. If you would like to attend the November evening, could I ask that you complete [this form](#) indicating your wish to attend.

With best wishes,

Gareth Beynon  
Headteacher