

Overndale Road, Downend, Bristol, BS16 2RQ
Tel: 01454 862630

Date: 21 October 2020

Dear parents / carers

Mobile phone use for students

We have made the decision that as of **Monday 2nd November, the use of student mobile phones will not be permitted at any time during school hours**. Students who bring mobile phones in to school will be required to hand their phone in to staff at the start of the day. Staff will store phones individually, record details of the phone and owner and keep it in a secure location all day, only returning to students before they leave.

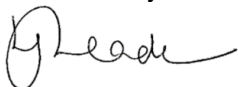
We have decided on this course of action after much discussion and consideration. There is a great deal of evidence available to support the negative impact on students mental health, learning and progress when young people spend too much time on their devices, or become distracted by their phones. It is also impossible for us to fully safeguard students from the impact of the many damaging aspects of the digital world, such as chat rooms / messaging facilities, accessing inappropriate materials or potential bullying of other students, via the huge range of social media platforms available on their phones. Over time, we have also seen an increase in extremely unpleasant incidents which could have been avoided, if students were not able to communicate via their mobile phones. Although these incidents generally happen outside school, they can spill over in to school time.

Despite the high level protection of our internal network systems, which protects students from being able to access inappropriate materials on line; we have no control over students' access to any aspect of the on line world, when they use their own personal devices. We feel that we will be able to better safeguard pupils, if we manage access to their phones during school hours. We will leave it to you, as parents and carers, to decide when and how your children have access to the internet and their phones outside of school hours.

We know that some young people will find separating themselves from their phones extremely difficult, so we are asking for your support to talk to students and help them understand why this is necessary. We have anticipated some of the questions and queries that might be asked and we have provided some responses on the back of this letter to help your conversations and ours. Please do not hesitate to contact the provision leads if you have any questions that you would like to discuss.

Thank you very much, in advance, for your support in helping us make this work.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Louise'.

Louise Leader
Headteacher, Pathways Learning Centre

Relationships

Respect



Empathy

Perseverance

Key questions / queries we expect students to ask:

- **I need to have a phone to contact my parents / arrange a lift / help keep me safe.** You will still be able to use your phone on the way to and from school. You just need to hand it in when you arrive.
- **Will I be able to use my phone at break or lunch times?** No, phones will be stored all day and only return at the end of the day.
- **I need to listen to music in some lessons to help me concentrate and my teacher is ok with this?** You are welcome to bring in a small device for playing music instead of using your phone. We will also be including MP3 players in the PLC rewards prize drawer at the end of each term. So you might even be able to win one!
- **I need to use my phone to help me in lessons?** Teachers will provide you with all the equipment and resources you need to support learning.
- **Having my mobile phone helps me with my anxiety.** There is an increasing number of significant studies that point to mobile phones having the opposite effect. Social media and mobile phone usage has led to an increase in anxiety and mental health issues, particularly in children.
- **I need to be able to phone my mum / dad / check on my dog. Can I keep my phone?** No, but you just need to ask a member of staff and they will give you access to a phone so you can make a phone call. If a school phone is not available then staff will allow you to use your phone under supervision.
- **My mum / dad / gran, need to call me to check I'm ok, give me a message.** Parents can phone the PLC office and leave a message, or ask to speak to staff, or students at an appropriate time. We will not take students out of lessons unless it is an emergency.
- **What if I refuse to hand my phone in?** Staff will ask you to explain if there is a particular reason why you do not want to hand your phone in. If there is a genuine issue, they will explain the alternative arrangements that they will put in place for you to have access to a phone when you need it.
- **What if I continue to refuse to hand in my phone?** Staff will contact your parents / carers and ask them to speak to you and remind you of the need to hand your phone in. If you continue to refuse, staff will take away certain privileges and / or give out a sanction. This might include contacting parents to ask them to come and collect your phone. Break, lunch or after school detentions. Continued lack of co-operation or refusing requests from staff may result in fixed term exclusions. If the problem persists we will review your onsite placement at PLC with parents, if these expectations cannot be followed.