



Our Ref: DJA/NJD/Nov2019/005

29th November 2019

Dear Parents / Carers

I am communicating with you important information regarding a change to the school rules around mobile 'phones from January 2020.

When Rednock was newly built 10 years ago, it was a pathfinder school, aiming to use new technologies to promote learning. Consequently, we supported the use of laptops and smartphones as educational devices.

Over the past few years, research – both educational and medical - has examined the use of smartphones and the impact of social media on teenagers. Educationally, the possibility of distraction outweighs the possible benefits. The use of smartphones is largely unnecessary. This was supported by 2015 research from the London School of Economics, which found that "after schools banned unrestricted access of mobile phones, the test scores of students aged 16 improved on average by 6.4% and time lost in classes that permitted free access to smartphones was equivalent to around 5 days of schooling per year". *'Creating a Culture'* (Department of Education 2017).

The impact upon self-confidence is significant. Looking at images of others has been proven to create feelings of anxiety and inferiority. This narrowing definition of what is "attractive" harms self-image and can lead to cyber bullying. Over-use of smartphones is having an impact upon sleeping patterns: 36% of teens self-report waking up and checking their device at least once a night. Amongst teenagers, 41% get under 7 hours sleep. This continuous deprivation can lead to overeating and diabetes but also "depressive thinking, poor concentration, leading to poor outcomes in school and lower self-confidence. As hours on mobile phones increase, several studies are showing that it means an increased chance that a teenager will report some sort of emotional challenge around anxiety or symptoms of depression".

We cannot ignore the strength of this research and what we witness first hand at school; the arguments are too powerful. In order to bring about a better focus and concentration, which leads to better outcomes, we are changing our approach towards the rules around students using their mobile phones from January 2020.

Students will be expected to turn their 'phones off before they enter the school site in the morning and place them out of sight for the remainder of the day. They will not be allowed to use them at all during social times and only under the (very rare) direction of their class teacher in a lesson where it has been deemed and agreed as educationally valid to do so. Should they need to contact home – or parents / carers need to contact them, we have four Community Support Officers and receptionists to facilitate this. Students will be allowed to use their phones after 3pm once they have been dismissed from lesson.

If a student uses his / her mobile phone when they should not do so, the 'phone will be confiscated for the rest of the school day and returned to the student by a senior member of staff. Any further offence(s) would mean that the parent/carer would need to come in and collect the 'phone: a senior member of staff will call the parent / carer as soon as possible but within 48 hours to arrange a mutually convenient time for collection. Sixth formers will keep their 'phones on them but are only allowed to use them in the 6th form areas.

I do hope that you understand the reasoning behind this decision. It is the right thing to do for students' well-being. Please discuss this with your children over the Christmas break. We will be holding a Parental Enquiry Clinic on Tuesday 17th December between 4.00 – 5.00pm for parents / carers to come in to school and discuss any concerns they may have with us so we can answer these and ensure we have met all needs.

Thank you for your support.

David Alexander
Head Teacher

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