

Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2025

Dear parents/carers,

I hope this communication finds you well.

I am writing to you today to let you know about changes to our policy regarding mobile phones. These changes will take effect from September 2025.

### **Reason for the change**

Young people should be able to come to Netherwood Academy to **learn, free from distraction or risks to their safety and wellbeing**. We already have a policy that says that mobile phones should not be “seen, heard or used”, but evidence continues to show that simply having the ability to access phones is a distraction from learning (the main purpose of school), and can lead to issues between scholars and/or safety concerns.

Many schools across the country are putting in place - or already have - similar measures to address the challenges that mobile phones present in school.

### **The problem with mobile phones**

Evidence shows us that mobile phones are damaging to a child’s development because phones:

1. are highly addictive.
2. are linked to safeguarding and mental health problems.
3. expose children to harmful content including violence, grooming and pornography.
4. reduce attention-spans, preventing scholars from concentrating.
5. reduce the time children spend playing, exploring, interacting, and developing vital social skills.

Some of you may have seen the Netflix series ‘Adolescence’ and will no doubt have been horrified at how children can become victims of grooming, graphic content and bad influences in our own homes. Alongside this, an increasing body of evidence is now telling us very clearly about the damaging impact that smartphones are having on children’s ability to learn, as well highlighting the impact that they can have on mental health.

### **What are we going to do from September?**

From September, **phones will need to be placed in a form group ‘Phone Safe’ in the morning**. This will be locked and stored in a secure area for the duration of the day. This means that scholars will not be thinking about their phone or the messages that they are receiving. As a result, they will be able to focus on learning during lessons and socialising during breaktime.

At the end of the day, as part of the end of day form tutor check in, tutors will hand phones back out to the scholars and then dismiss them from school via line up in the usual way. **Phones will only be switched on once scholars have left the school site**. This means that no scholar should have a mobile phone on their person during the school day.

For any scholar that has an emergency appointment that day, we simply need to have been made aware in advance, and we will make accommodations for them to be able to collect their phone when they leave for their appointment.

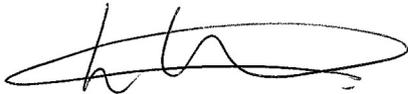
We are also aware that some scholars use smartphones to monitor their blood sugar levels. There will, of course, be medical exemptions in these circumstances: in these cases, the SENCO or staff responsible for First Aid will be in touch to make arrangements.

As ever, if there is a reason that you need to contact your child during the school day, please contact Reception. We are here to help with any contact you need to make through the day, and we are increasing capacity and time available to help with this.

I know that this is a change to our current approach, but I also know that you will appreciate the positive impact this will have not just on the learning of scholars, but their overall wellbeing, social and emotional development. Any measures we can take to ensure that your child is able to learn, thrive and lead a successful life will continue to be our priority.

At the end of this letter there are a series of **frequently asked questions** that parents/carers of children from schools with similar phones-free policies have asked. If you have any other questions about this policy change, please do get in touch via [contact@astreanetherwood.org](mailto:contact@astreanetherwood.org). Otherwise, I thank you for your continued partnership in supporting your child's education.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. Harper', with a large, sweeping flourish underneath.

Mr Luke Harper

**Vice Principal**

## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. What evidence supports the benefits of a phones-free environment?

We have provided a comprehensive list of research, evidence, and references in the 'References' section below.

### 2. Will scholars still have access to technology for learning?

Absolutely, where appropriate for the subject being studied, school will provide devices.

### 3. What if a scholar needs their phone for medical reasons?

Where medical exemptions are required, these adjustments will be carried out in collaboration with parents / carers and put in place following the appropriate letters from professionals. This will always be done in collaboration with parents.

### 4. Can scholars use phones at break or lunch time?

No, however this isn't a change from our current policy and has never been the case.

### 5. What happens if a scholar accidentally forgets to turn off or store my phone? Will they get in trouble if their phone is seen or heard?

Our processes around the collection and distribution of phones have been carefully considered to ensure they are fully supportive of scholars, encouraging them to make the right choices. Scholars will store their phone in the phone safe during their morning form tutor session, therefore it would be highly unusual to 'forget' within this process.

If a scholar refuses to hand in their phone or is caught on their phone during the day they will be given a Reset Base sanction on Bromcom and will be expected to put their phone in the safe in reception until 15:00 the following day. Refusal to follow this process is a breach of the school behaviour policy and may place the scholar at risk of suspension.

### 6. How can I contact my child during the school day?

In the case of urgent matters, parents/carers are welcome to call reception via 01226 272000. Otherwise, use MCAS or e-mail [contact@astreanetherwood.org](mailto:contact@astreanetherwood.org) and messages will be passed on to the most appropriate colleague.

### 7. What should my child do in case of an emergency?

They should speak to any member of staff if they require urgent help. We have trained first aid and safeguarding leads who can support with emergency matters where necessary. If required, contact will be made home as soon as practicable.

### 8. Can my child use their phone after school hours while still on school grounds?

No, if your child is in school, be it for lessons or enrichment clubs, the policy still applies. Once your child has left site, the policy does not apply and they are able to use their phone.

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