



DUKE'S SECONDARY SCHOOL

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PRINCIPAL: Mr S Gibson

13 March 2019

Dear Parent/Carer

Mobile Phones & Smart Watches

We work hard at Duke's School to ensure that school is a safe space for our pupils. Unfortunately, we are seeing an increase in the number of pupils who are misusing mobile phones at school, and this raises concerns around the safeguarding of the children and adults within school. We are reminding our pupils about the rules around mobile phones at Duke's and I thought it would be helpful to remind parents and carers at the same time. Our rules have not changed, but some pupils and their families do not appear to be clear about what they are and as pupils find that the rules are being rigidly enforced to ensure a safer school environment we wanted you to be aware and to support this stance at home.

Duke's School is not alone in this, and it is fair to say that mobile phones are causing too many issues in schools around the country. Many schools have seen mobile phones used for bullying, abuse, posting pictures, videos or messages online without permission, and causing unnecessary stress for pupils, their parents and their teachers. Mobile phones are also valuable, and many schools report that the loss, theft or damage to mobile phones during the school day is a major concern.

We recognise that many parents/carers want their child to carry a mobile phone for their own safety and for being able to contact each other on the way to or from school. Pupils are allowed to carry a phone in their bag or pocket, but it must be **switched off**. Pupils will be reminded to switch their phone off and to put it out of sight at the start of each day. Pupils may not use their mobile phone at school at any time, including before and after school, in revision sessions, clubs or detentions.

Smart watches may not be worn to school at all. In line with examination rules, a pupil wearing a smart watch in an exam may have all their examination marks cancelled and receive no qualifications.

There have been some incidents in school where pupils have contacted parents/carers rather than staff when an issue has arisen in school. During school hours we need to be able to carry out our duty of care, and pupils need to see the adults around them immediately so we can ensure everyone is safe at all times. Contacting parents/carers can delay a response and can lead parents/carers to think we are not carrying out our duty of care when we have, in fact, not been made aware that there is a concern. Pupils can see their Pastoral Link or a member of the admin team if they need to contact you during the school day.

I am also disappointed to report that some parents/carers are texting their child during school hours. We must insist that parents/carers refrain from this as it encourages pupils to check their phone. If you need to get a message to your child please phone the school and we will get a message to them, or you can text them after school hours.



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Pupils who are found with their phone out in school or wearing a smart watch will have it confiscated and they will need to collect it at the end of the school day. The sight of a phone, whether switched on or off, requires that phone to be confiscated. Any pupil who argues with a member of staff over this will receive a detention, and should the pupil continue to refuse to hand over their phone they will spend time in the LRC or, as with any other form of refusing to follow a reasonable instruction, may be excluded from school.

If a pupil has a phone confiscated three times the phone will only be released by school when collected by a parent/carer. If this is not on the same day, we will store the phone in our safe overnight.

Incidents of phones being confiscated will be recorded on ClassCharts so you will be aware if your child has broken these rules and you will be able to have conversations at home to support how important it is to follow these expectations.

It is not difficult to imagine how distressing it can be if you are targeted by someone with a phone or smart watch. We want to keep our pupils safe from others posting pictures of them without permission, making hurtful comments, making threats or bullying them in this way, and I am sure that you as a parent/carer will support us in helping to create a safer space for your child through emphasising these expectations.

If you have any questions or queries around this matter, please do not hesitate to contact a member of the senior leadership team at the school.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "S Gibson", written in a cursive style.

Mr S Gibson
Principal