



SARAH BONNELL
SCHOOL

Wednesday 5 June 2024

Dear Parent(s) /Adult(s) with Parental Responsibility,

Social Media and Mobile Phones in School

I hope this letter finds you well. As we navigate the increasingly digital world, I wanted to take a moment to discuss the topic of social media and its impact on young people. Social media has become an integral part of our children's lives, offering both opportunities and challenges. It provides a platform for communication, creativity, and connection with others. However, it also presents risks, such as exposure to inappropriate content, cyberbullying, and loss of privacy.

This term we have seen an increase in the number of young people using social media in a harmful way - recording and filming others without their consent, posting images on social media platforms that are often unkind and, on occasion, illegal. There have been cases where students have created group-chats, at home or outside school, which cyberbully their peers and lead to face to face conflict in school.

This behaviour is against our school code of conduct, The Sarah Bonnell Way which expects all students 'To be kind and treat others in the way they would like to be treated in person and online'. The school takes any inappropriate behavior using social media very seriously and students involved have been suspended. I am writing to ask for your continued help and support.

What is the school doing?

At school, students have assemblies, workshops and lessons about safe and appropriate use of social media. We also have a mobile phone /digital devices policy - a summary for students can be found [here](#).

Students are not allowed to use digital devices at any time during the school day. **Digital devices (mobile phones, airpods, smart watches) are to be 'off and out of sight' at all times during the school day including break and lunch-time.** The reason for this ban is to protect students, and staff, from the potential risks mentioned above and enable students to focus on their learning and the 'real time' opportunities available in school. Students found using digital devices will be required to hand this to a member of staff to prevent any further use, distractions or disruption. Repeated breach of this rule could lead to further sanctions including suspension from school in line with our Behaviour Policy.

What is the Government Guidance on mobile phones in school?

In her introduction to the DfE Guidance for schools on mobile phone, Gillian Keegan, Secretary of state for Education, states

'Mobile phones in schools risk unnecessary distraction, disruption and diversion. One in three secondary school pupils report that mobile phones are used in most lessons without permission. This not only distracts the single pupil using the phone, but disrupts the lesson for a whole class, and diverts teachers' efforts away from learning. We owe it to our children to do what we can to remove distractions and enable them to be fully present and engaged in the classroom. We also owe it to our pupils to keep them safe at school. One in five pupils have experienced bullying online. By removing mobile phones from the school day, we can create a safe space where pupils are protected from the risks and dangers associated with social media and cyber-bullying, as well as the peer pressure and possible stigma associated with owning what are often expensive devices.' (continued)

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At Sarah Bonnell we agree with this sentiment and our approach follows this guidance from the Department for Education which was published in February 2024. You can read more about this '[Mobile phones in schools](#)


How can parents help?

As parents, it's important that you are also actively involved in your child's social media usage and talk to them about the ban on using mobile phones. I encourage you to have open and honest conversations with your children about the responsible and safe use of social media. To ensure their safety and well-being you should set clear guidelines and boundaries, monitor their online activity and be aware of the platforms they are using. Many parents are choosing to avoid buying their children smartphones and devices that are digitally enabled until they are at least 14 when they will be more aware of how to use social media safely and appropriately. Additionally, being a good role model as an adult by demonstrating positive online behavior and healthy tech habits can greatly influence our children's attitudes toward social media. I urge you to stay informed about the latest trends and issues related to social media, so that together we can support our children in navigating this digital landscape.

If you would like to know more about how you can support your daughter to be safe on-line, our school offers training for parents to support them with this as part of our status as an accredited National Online Safety School. Please use the following link <https://nationalcollege.com/enrol/sarah-bonnell-school> to complete the annual parent online safety course. If you have any questions or would like further advice/support please do get in contact with our online safety lead Salma Adel, Associate Senior Leader.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and support of our ban on the use of mobile phones and digital devices in school. I believe that by working together, we can help our children develop a more healthy and balanced relationship with social media.

Yours sincerely,



Ms Rae Potter
Headteacher

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