



## Mobile Phones and Social Networking

Revised: June 2023

### Provenance

This policy acknowledges the benefits to both pupils and parents of having a mobile phone available whilst travelling to and from school and the role that online social networking plays in modern society. The policy is the school's considered response to several incidents in which the dignity of individuals has been compromised by the actions of other pupils. The policy is reasonable in supporting parents in their need to safeguard their children travelling to and from school, but it is also driven by the need to safeguard all pupils whilst in school and to guard against the selfish and insensitive actions of a small minority out of school. It also ensures that pupils are provided with the opportunity to focus on their learning and develop conversational skills without the interference of a mobile device.



### Mobile Phones

#### Issues of Concern

- Nearly all mobile phones now have cameras - several years ago, there was a very sad incident where a pupil suffered the indignity of having indecent photos taken of him against his will and these photos were passed via picture messaging to others.
- The development of internet accessible smart phones makes this sad possibility a more dangerous prospect. Only recently, there was an incident of a photo of a vulnerable pupil having been taken at lunchtime and then uploaded, with comments, to Instagram.
- Most children already spend too long on their phones and so the sanctuary of school without one will allow them to focus on what is important.
- There have also been cases when children have found themselves in trouble in school, phoned home to enlist the support of their parents who then follow up with a call to a senior teacher who has no knowledge of any incident. It often turns out that the issue has been exaggerated and the call home does nothing other than cause unnecessary panic for parents.

## Safety travelling to and from school

The school has no qualms about children travelling to and from school with a mobile phone. What we do ask is that they adhere to the following simple procedure:

- Switch the phone off before entering the school site i.e whilst on the public pavement
- Do not switch the phone on until off the school site i.e. back on the public pavement

## Residential educational visits

As a result of several of the issues cited above, **the school does not generally allow mobile phones on residential visits**. That said, a decision is made on a visit by visit basis. Arrangements for communication with the school party will be explained to parents at the parents' meetings that are arranged prior to all residential visits.

## Consequences

There are some children who choose not to follow the above procedures. Should this come to light by e.g. the phone ringing, or by being used by a pupil, the consequences are as follows:

- The phone will be confiscated by the member of staff and sent down to the main office
- A member of the office staff will then securely store the confiscated phone and a letter will be sent via Class Charts to inform parents:
  - For a first offence - confiscation for one week
  - For a second offence - confiscation for two weeks
  - For a third offence - confiscation for three weeks and parents invited into school to discuss the matter.
- Such a confiscation is in line with Section 91 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, which enables a member of staff to confiscate, retain or dispose of a pupil's property as a disciplinary penalty, where reasonable to do so.

## Searches

As a part of the school's Behaviour Policy, the Governors have decided that mobile phones and any item capable of taking a photographic image / recording or connecting to the internet – including smart watches, are banned items in the sense that they cannot be used whilst on the school site, as such, pupils may be searched for such items which may then be confiscated in line with this policy.

## Statutory guidance for dealing with electronic devices

Staff confiscating such items should consult a member of the SLT if they are concerned about any data stored on such devices. Data or files can be examined by a member of the SLT if there is a good reason to do so. Following such an examination, any offending files or data may be erased if the member of SLT thinks there is good reason to do so.

The member of SLT must have regard to the following guidance issued by the Secretary of State when determining what is a "good reason" for examining or erasing the contents of an electronic device:

*In determining a 'good reason' to examine or erase the data or files the staff member must reasonably suspect that the data or file on the device in question has been, or could be, used to cause harm, to disrupt teaching or break the school rules.*

If inappropriate material is found on the device it is up to the member of the SLT to decide whether they should delete that material, retain it as evidence (of a criminal offence or a breach of school discipline) or whether the material is of such seriousness that it requires the involvement of the police.

## Conclusion

The school accepts that having a mobile phone confiscated can cause some inconvenience. Parents often suggest that their son / daughter will be unable to go out because they are not allowed to without his / her phone, or that they have a travel pass on their phone. Parents are asked to consider such a response in the light of the real and serious safeguarding issues cited above. As a school, we have provided the means by which pupils can bring mobile phones to school. We have also, by means of this policy, and through assemblies with all year groups, communicated our very clear expectations with regard to mobile phones and other electronic devices along with the consequences of a lack of cooperation.

Our strong advice is that younger pupils, certainly those in Years 7 and 8, should not be provided with a smartphone. If concerned about safety on the way to and from school, pupils would be best provided with a 'dumbphone' i.e. one without internet access, but able to be used for texts and calls.

The Mobile Phones section (above) of this policy obviously eliminates the possibility of social networking being acceptable whilst in school. The back page of this policy sets out the common approach adopted by all secondary schools in the Fylde and Wyre districts.

The school acknowledges that the use of social media sites can be a force for good in the modern world; indeed, the school has its own Twitter account. However, the proliferation in use of such sites has also, when abused, caused great harm to relationships within and beyond school and to individual members of our school community. It would be impossible to set out all possible abuses herein but the following four points are offered as general guidance as to what should **not** form a part of any contribution to a social networking site:

- Any form of bullying;
- Inappropriate comments or language;
- Ridicule of individuals or groups of people - pupils or families;
- Any comments about members of staff.

Should pupils become aware of such abuse they should report it to a member of staff. Pupils should not contribute to any such 'discussions', including 'liking', in support of others, no matter how well intentioned - doing so may well lead to sanctions being applied.

The Governors of Cardinal Allen want to reassure pupils and their families that they can expect support from the school if they become victims of such abuse, but that they should also be aware of the consequences when they are the perpetrators of such abuse. The school's behaviour policy specifically protects:

- *the rights of pupils and staff to use modern media without fear of embarrassment or bullying;*
- *the right of school staff not to be subjected to harassment at any time in their professional or private lives.*

Furthermore, section 8 of the policy, '**Pupils' conduct beyond the school gates'**, goes on to say:

Teachers have a statutory power to discipline pupils for misbehaving outside of the school premises. Section 89(5) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 gives headteachers a specific statutory power to regulate pupils' behaviour in these circumstances "to such extent as is reasonable."

The school will discipline a pupil for misbehaviour at any time that:

- could have repercussions for the orderly running of the school;
- poses a threat to another pupil or member of the public;
- could adversely affect the reputation of the school.

The behaviour of pupils outside school e.g. inappropriate use of social networking sites can be considered as grounds for exclusion. This will be a matter of judgement for the headteacher as outlined in Section 11 of the School's Behaviour Policy.

### **Support for Parents and Pupils**

Pupils are made aware of the advantages and potential abuse of social media sites through a combination of Creative Computing, LIFE Learning, and assemblies. We also acknowledge that for parents, just 'keeping-up' with technology can be a challenge, and so the school website has an '[Online Safety](#)' section in which advice and links can be found covering a wide range of issues and media sites.

Most social media platforms require users to be at least 13 years of age i.e. certainly no Year 7 pupils.

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# All our Schools adopt the same approach to social networking.

We believe that:

*Children must abide by age restrictions relating to internet information sharing sites;*

*We expect all parents/guardians to support us in the development of safe practice;*

*Where a school needs to investigate inappropriate use of social networking we expect parents to give us full support. This includes agreeing to us viewing the site;*

*Where necessary incidents will be reported to the appropriate authority;*

**Lytham St. Anne's High School**

**Millfield Science & Performing Arts College**

**Baines School**

**Saint Aidan's CE Technology College**

**McKee Centre**

**Carr Hill High School**

**Cardinal Allen Catholic High School**

**Fleetwood High School**

**St. Bede's RC High School**

**Hodgson Academy**

**Garstang Community Academy**

**Brookfield**

The YouTube logo, featuring the word "You" in black and "Tube" in white on a red rounded rectangle.The Facebook logo, featuring the word "facebook" in white lowercase letters on a blue rounded rectangle.The Flickr logo, featuring the word "flickr" in blue lowercase letters with a red dot on the 'i'.The MySpace logo, featuring a white icon of three people and the word "myspace" in white lowercase letters on a blue rounded rectangle.The Twitter logo, featuring the word "twitter" in blue lowercase letters on a white rounded rectangle.