

Our Ref: LTM/kmd/mobilephones

21 February 2024



Dear Parent / Carer,

Re: Welcome Back, Policy Update and Reminders

Welcome back to the start of the second half of the Spring term, I hope you have enjoyed any time spent at home or away last week.

At this time, I wanted to remind you of several updates and to clarify the school's policy regarding the use of mobile phones and similar devices following recent announcements from the Department for Education.

Mobile Phones

The Government have published guidance to all schools regarding the use of mobile phones which promote a 'mobile free environment'. ([Mobile phones in schools - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)). For us this does not lead to any significant change. Our students are already required to have mobile phones 'Off and Away' during the school day. We will be reviewing our procedures to ensure they are in line with the DfE guidance and will provide further updates should they arise:

- When on school site, students' mobile phones should be always 'Off & Away'.
- We recognise that due to travel into school, most students may have a mobile phone with them; these should not be used at any point during the school day and be switched off on arrival at school. Should parents need to contact students, or students need to call home, contact should be made with staff on reception who will take any appropriate action.
- Before 8:40am students should not have their mobile phone in use on school site; if seen, students will be reminded of the school policy and asked to switch it off and put it away. Should this be a frequent occurrence with any identified student then this will be reported and students will be spoken to.
- After 8:40am, if students are seen on site with a mobile phone, it will be confiscated by staff and safely stored in reception until the end of the school day for the student to collect. *Should a student have a mobile phone confiscated on more than one occasion, parents are required to come into school to collect the phone at the earliest opportunity, parents will be informed should this occur.*
- For 6th Form students we recognise that an amended approach is required as outlined in the Government guidance. Year 12 & 13 students will be permitted to use phones in designated areas, such as the main 6th form study centre.
- Our formal school, day ends at 3:15pm. We recognise that students may need to contact home due to travel arrangements, students should not however be seen with or switch phones on until they have left the school buildings.
- With regards to after school clubs, fixtures and activities, normal practice will be that phones should not be used whilst on school site. Currently trips and visits are managed on an individual basis depending on the activity students are involved with. We will ensure that clear communication is given to parents prior to any significant events across the school year.

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We will be reminding all students of our policy throughout assemblies and thank you for your support in promoting these messages through discussion at home.

School Uniform

Thank you for the positive feedback we have received regarding our recent communication about school uniform ([new-uniform-feb24.pdf \(oldburywells.com\)](#)). Should parents wish to discuss any developments there will be opportunity at the consultation evening outlined below, alternatively parents can forward comments via the school email school@oldburywells.com.

Attendance

Over the coming weeks we will be promoting the importance of good attendance and punctuality at school. Look out for updates which contain key information about how parents can support this and what students need to know about the advantages of having good attendance at school. (Please see some of the important facts shared by the Department for Education at the end of this letter).

PSHE and RSE Policy

A reminder that on Tuesday, 27th February 2024 (6-7pm, West Hall) we will be holding our Consultation Evening regarding our Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) curriculum in school, this includes how we support students' awareness of Relationships and Sex Education (RSE). If you would like to attend then please book a slot by clicking the following link [PSHE Consultation Evening 27th February, 6pm - Attendance Response \(office.com\)](#).

Thank you as always for your support to ensure that our school environment provides the very best provision for all our students. Having clear working practices which are well understood and promoted across the school supports all our young people to make the very best progress. We look forward to seeing parents in school as part of the consultation event, or receiving any questions parents may have.

Your sincerely



Lee Tristham
Headteacher

Please see information on following page from DfE regarding mobile phones.

Facts and figures from the DfE regarding Mobile Phones:

- By the age of 12, 97% of children own a mobile phone. While mobile phone ownership is very high once a pupil starts secondary school education, it remains parents' responsibility for deciding whether their child has a phone or not.
- The majority (63%) of 8-11 year olds use social media and messaging apps, rising to 93% for children between 12-15 years old. By understanding which apps their children are using, parents can make informed choices about their child's mobile phone use and support schools in providing education about online safety.
- The National Behaviour Survey (2021-2022) found that 29% of secondary school pupils (rising to 40% for key stage 4 pupils) reported mobile phones being used without permission in most of their lessons. 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. Parents can play an important role in supporting the school in effectively implementing its policy on mobile phones and eliminating this form of distraction for pupils in lessons.
- Mobile phones have already been prohibited or restricted in one in four countries worldwide, including France, The Netherlands and several Australian states and territories.
- Screen time can displace positive activities. Socialising, exercise, and good sleep are positive influences on wellbeing. All these can be displaced by screen time. By prohibiting the use of mobile phones during break and lunchtimes at school as well as in lessons, more time for socialising and exercise can be created during the school day.
- One in five children have experienced bullying online. Data from Office of National Statistics (2020) suggests that one in five children (19%) aged 10-15 experienced at least one type of bullying behaviour online, and out of them, around three quarters (72%) said they experienced at least some of it at school or during school time. Around half of children (52%) who experienced online bullying behaviours said they would not describe them as bullying and around one in four (26%) did not report their experiences.
- Three in ten pupils cite making and maintaining friendships and their mental health as a cause of worry, anxiety, or depression. By removing mobile phones, children and young people can spend more time staying active and socialising face to face with their peers, activities which have a positive impact on wellbeing.