Policy on the use of mobile phones and other smart devices in school

1. Introduction and aims

While mobile phones and personal communication devices are commonplace in today's society, it is recognised that personal mobile phones including smart phones have the potential to be used inappropriately. Most mobile phones now offer Internet and email access, alongside messaging, camera, video and sound recording. They can provide security and reassurance; however there also associated risks. Safeguarding of children within the school is paramount.

Effective guidance is in place to avoid the use of mobile phones causing unnecessary disruptions and distractions within the workplace, and to ensure effective safeguarding practice is promoted to protect against potential misuse.

The terms 'phone' or 'mobile phone' in this guidance denotes mobile phones, iPods, iPads, MP3 players, MP4 players and smart watches.

1.1 The guidance aims to:

- Set out clear guidance for the use of mobile phones for staff (including supply staff), pupils and volunteers
- Set out clear guidance visitors and contractors
- Ensure robust safeguarding
- Support schools' other policies relating to child protection and behaviour
- Offer advice on Covid-19 amendments

Staff responsibilities

All staff (including teachers, support staff, and supply staff) may wish to have their personal mobile phones at work for use in case of emergencies, however there is a clear expectation that all personal use is limited to areas and times when there are no children present or likely to be present.

2.1 All staff:

- The school expects staff to lead by example and therefore should not make or receive personal calls or respond to texts/messages, whilst children are present or during contact time.

- Staff (including volunteers and supply staff) should only use their mobile phones for personal contact in designated areas such as a staff room.

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- Other than in agreed exceptional circumstances, mobile phones should be switched off or on silent and left in a safe place during lesson times. *(If school have more specific requirements such as that staff store phones in lockers or similar this could be included here).*

- It is advisable to password protect mobile phones when not in use.

2.2 Safeguarding

- Staff should not contact pupils or parents from their personal mobile phone in or out of school time or give their mobile phone number to pupils or parents. If a member of staff needs to make telephone contact with a pupil, a school telephone should be used.

- Staff should not share personal contact details through social media and messaging apps.

- Staff should never send to, or accept from, colleagues or pupils, texts or images that could be viewed as inappropriate

- Staff are not permitted to take photos or videos of pupils or anything else (e.g. work) that might identify the pupil on a personal mobile.

- If photos or videos are being taken as part of the school curriculum or for a professional capacity, the school equipment will be used for this. Staff should not allow themselves to be photographed by a pupil(s).

2.3 Using a personal mobile for work purposes

In some circumstances, it may be appropriate for staff to use a personal mobile phone for work purposes. Where possible this should always be agreed with a line manager or Senior Leader in advance. Such circumstances may include, but are not limited to:

- Emergency evacuations
- Parental contact in emergencies (mobile phones setting that allow for the number not to be identified should be used)

This guidance should be seen as a safeguard for members of staff and the school. Any breach of school policy may result in disciplinary action against that member of staff.

3 Pupils:

We recognise that some older pupils will bring mobile phones to school. Expectations around phone usage should be clearly communicated to all pupils and parents.

3.1 Primary

- Pupils are dissuaded from bringing mobile phones to school.

- If it is deemed necessary for a pupil to bring a mobile phone to school, (e.g. in the case of older pupils because they travel to and from school independently), then the expectation is that the pupil hands their phone to the class teacher.

3.2 Secondary

- When on the school site and during lesson times mobile phones should be switched off or on silent and stored out of sight.

- Between lessons mobile phone use is/is not permitted. *(Amend as appropriate)*

- It is advisable to password protect mobile phones when not in use.

4 Parents, visitors and contractors:

Parents, visitors and contractors are respectfully requested not to use their mobile phones at all on the school site/in any area where children/young people are present.

- Should phone calls and/or texts/messages need to be taken or made, use is restricted to those areas not accessed by children to avoid any unnecessary disturbance or disruption to others.

- Should phone calls/and or texts/messages need to be taken or made, visitors are asked to leave the premises to do so. *(Delete/amend as appropriate).*

- Photos of children must not be taken without prior discussion with a member of the Senior Management Team and in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 and using the 'Use of images consent form' (please refer to the school's document "Guidance for schools and other establishments on the use of images".

- Any individual bringing a personal device into the school must ensure that it contains no inappropriate or illegal content.

5 Inappropriate or illegal content:

Where there is a suspicion that the material on a mobile phone may be unsuitable and may constitute evidence relating to a criminal offence, the 'Allegations of Abuse' process will be followed (please refer to the school's 'Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy').

Schools may also wish to add the following points:

- For both staff and pupils, the school retains no liability for any phone that is brought into school which is either lost, stolen or damaged

- For both staff and pupils, the school retains no liability for any phone that is used in a manner that is against the owners consent.

COVID -19

Appendix A are examples of what could be used (subject to any Government updates at the time) regarding any further school closures following an increase in Covid-19 case or national lockdowns. These details should be added either as an addendum or highlighted within the main body of the school policy.

Appendix A

All staff, (including teachers, support staff, volunteers and supply staff) should ensure they are familiar with their schools Covid-19 Risk Assessment and follow the processes in the

document in order to comply with all Covid-19 adjustments for their setting including any amendments for the use of personal mobile devices for staff and pupils.

The launch of the NHS Test and Trace App, which is available for those aged sixteen or over to download, has reinforced the need for schools to have a clear policy in place with regards to staff, pupil and visitor use of mobile phones.

Staff

Using a personal phone to contact pupils/parents:

- Unless staff are having to work from home during the coronavirus pandemic existing school protocols should be adhered to. If it is necessary to contact pupils and parents/carers to check, for example on their wellbeing, staff would need to precede any phone call with a blocking system so their phone number is not shared with pupils, parents/carers.

- Whilst school staff are encouraged to download the NHS Test and Trace App to their personal devices to support contact tracing, there is no need for personal devices to remain switched on or to be carried upon the staff member's person for the purposes of Test and Trace.

- Staff are advised to pause the app upon arrival at school and store their phone in the usual way.

- In the event of a school-based contact of a staff member testing positive for Covid-19, existing school protocols would enable close contacts to be traced as guided by Public Health.

Pupils

- Pupils under the age of 16 cannot download the NHS Test and Trace App so there is no need for any amendment to the existing policy for the majority of pupils.

- Pupils over 16 years of age are encouraged to download the NHS Test and Trace App to their personal devices to support contact tracing out of school. However, there is no need for personal devices to remain switched on during the school day for the purposes of Test and Trace. In the event of a school-based contact of a student testing positive for Covid-19, existing school protocols would enable close contacts to be traced as guided by Public Health.

Parents, visitors and contractors:

As part of our Covid-19 risk assessment, visits to the school are limited to critical business only. In the event of a visitor coming on site they are required to observe social distancing, remaining at least 2m from pupils and staff at all times. If parents/carers need to come on site, for example to collect a child who is displaying symptoms of Covid-19, they are asked to observe social distancing from anyone who is not in their household whilst on the school site. In these circumstances the school's signing in/out arrangements would document this visit.

- The School will not be displaying a QR code for the NHS Test and Trace programme. We continue to expect visitors not to use their phone on the school site or in areas where children/young people are present including for the purposes of the NHS Test and Trace App as our own arrangements enable contact tracing.

- In the event of a school-based contact of a visitor testing positive for Covid-19, existing school protocols would enable close contacts to be traced as guided by Public Health.

Related Policies and guidance:

Model Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy (September 2021)

Guidance for Safer Working Practice for Adults who work with Children and Young People in Education Settings (April 2020)

Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2021)

Guidance for schools and other establishments on the use of images (Sep 21)

Data Protection: A toolkit for schools, DfE, (August 2018)

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