

Notification of a significant change to our policy on mobile phones

The main focus for us as a College is to ensure the very best climate for learning, so that students are fully prepared for lessons, and any distraction is eliminated.

To support this aim, we have made the decision to ban the use of mobile phones within College, because of their negative effect on student learning and behaviour.

This decision has not been taken lightly. We have spent a great deal of time over the last year considering the impact of the use of mobile phones in College. We have spoken to staff, parent members of the College forum, and looked at our behaviour logs. We have also read the latest research regarding their use in a school setting.

The main points of the new policy are as follows:

- Mobile phones should be **‘off and away’** at all times, and any phone seen or heard will be confiscated. This includes phones on display in shirt pockets.
- Phones that are confiscated will be returned to students at the end of the College day. Should there be a repeat occurrence within a half term, a call will be made home to request a parent / carer to collect the phone on their child’s behalf. Students who refuse to hand over their phone will be dealt with in line with the College’s behaviour policy.
- The restriction is in place at all times while students are within the grounds and buildings of the College. This includes when students arrive and leave at the end of the day.
- If students need to contact parents or carers during the College day, they should report to the reception office on North Site or South Site. Similarly, parents/carers may contact their child through reception, who will pass on the message as soon as possible.
- Should students need to use their phone to contact parents/carers for collection, following after-College activities for example, they must ask permission from a member of staff.
- Post 16 students will be allowed to use their phones in designated areas such as the Post 16 Centre or in class for specific guided activities planned by the teacher. They should not be used in public areas used by younger students such as the corridors or the canteens.

Problems related to the use of mobile phones in College

In the UK, more than 90% of teenagers own a mobile phone. The prevalence of these devices pose problems for Head teachers, and in many cases attitudes to their use has hardened as they have become more ubiquitous.

In a survey conducted in 2001, no schools banned mobile phones. By 2007, this had risen to 50%, and by 2012, some 98% of schools either did not allow mobile phones on school premises, or had significant restrictions in their use.

Our experience at Helston is that mobile phones are increasingly involved in creating confrontation between staff and students, due to students not following the rules and breaking our Acceptable Use Agreement. Examples include, using the phones to secretly listen to music, texting during lessons, taking photographs and filming students and staff without their permission, uploading images taken in College and using them to bully and abuse others online. The situation is further complicated by many students and some parents/carers seeing it as their "right" to have constant use of a device.

As well as the obvious social disadvantages of phone use in school, recent research has cast doubt on their educational worth. "Ill communication: The impact of mobile phones on student performance." by Louis –Philippe Beland and Richard Murphy found that after schools banned mobile phones, the test scores of 16 year old students improved by 6.4%. The economists reckon this is the "equivalent of adding five days to the school year."

In another study by Leeds Beckett University, a number of students aged 11-18 across the country were surveyed about their mobile phone use.

The student survey resulted in the following findings:

- 92 % regularly check their phones during the night.
- 67 % get between 2 and 4 hours' sleep due to checking their phones.
- 85 % regularly check their phones during family meals.
- 97 % regularly check their phones while doing their homework.
- 70 % discreetly check their phones during lesson time.

Professor Jonathan Glazzard, of the university's Carnegie Centre of Excellence for Mental Health in Schools, said adolescents were "desperate to network" and keep up to date with their online peers.

He said: "This results in broken sleep and tiredness during the school day. Adolescents need approximately eight to ten hours' sleep, but our research demonstrates that some get as little as two hours of sleep.

"These students attend school in a state of exhaustion. They are too tired to concentrate, and it affects their learning and behaviour. Disengagement in lessons results in them falling behind in their school work and they then develop other problems, such as low confidence and low self-worth."