

Mobile Phone Policy

Black Firs School

The possession and use of mobile phones by school students is now extensive, even in the primary school sector. Use of mobile phones, particularly with the advent of increasingly sophisticated smart-phones with cameras, internet access and a wide range of apps presents a number of problems, including:

- (i) Mobile phones can be valuable items and might prove a temptation to other students;
- (ii) Mobile phones can make students objects of envy or disparagement and could have implications with regard to discipline and potential bullying;
- (iii) Mobile phones, particularly when used for texting, can distract young children and make them unaware of potential dangers around them, ie when walking to School or crossing roads;
- (iv) Even when apparently silent, the use of mobiles phones for texting purposes could be potentially undermine classroom discipline; and
- (v) Use of the newer phones with integrated cameras could lead to child protection and data protection issues with regard to inappropriate capture, use or distribution of images.

The School has discussed the issues at length and believes it to be unrealistic to have a policy which prohibits students from bringing phones to School. As a School, fully committed to exploring the use of new technology in developing children's learning, we believe that it would be imprudent to forbid students' from carrying them; indeed, they may become an important part of personal IT equipment in the next few years and we are developing a BYOD policy. We also believe that a number of parents would be concerned for health & safety reasons if their child were not allowed to carry a phone at all and might therefore be unable to contact their parents in respect of any situation that might arise.

The issue is obvious it's about educating young people to: -

1. show respect – as our School Rule says, “treat others as you would like to be treated”
2. use technology appropriately & responsibly
3. learn to manage & minimise any risk
4. develop a strong morality & internal resilience
5. protect their own safety & the safety of other people

The School has put together guidance for the use of mobiles within Black Firs environment:

1. We generally advise all parents to discourage, students from bringing mobile phones to School on the grounds that they are valuable and may be lost, damaged or stolen. The School can take no responsibility for, or dedicate any time to, lost/stolen/missing mobiles. Students can use email or the School phone should they need to contact parents during the day or vice versa.
2. Where a student does bring a mobile phone to School, the phone must remain switched off and in the student's bag during the school day and may not be used, for any purpose, unless directed by a member of Staff, on School premises, grounds or during off-site school activities (such as school swimming, after-school clubs or residential activities). The Head Teacher may, at his discretion, allow any member of staff to approve individual requests in the case of genuine emergencies.
3. Where a Black Firs student is found by a member of staff to be using a mobile phone, as above, for any purpose, the phone will be confiscated from the child and returned *only* to the parent, guardian or carer.
4. The School will incorporate this policy into the behaviour policy and will treat breaches as they would treat any other breach of School rules.
5. We need to be aware that as technology changes we need to up to date. When filtering systems are developed for mobile technology we will review this guidance within a broader BYOD policy. This should be read in conjunction with the Personal Device Usage Policy.