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Mobile phone use in school

You will have seen in the news recently that the government has issued further guidance on how schools should approach the use of mobile phones in school. The government are keen to reduce the impact phones can have on bullying or causing distractions from teaching and learning and there is much talk in the media about phones being banned completely in school. As a rural school, Fairfield has always understood that many students need to bring their phones to school for the journey to and from home and in the main, we trust our students to follow school policy with them when they are in school. However, we are using the opportunity to improve some of our practices as follows.

The current policy states that phones should be switched off while in school, but evidence shows that this is not always the case. As of this week, I have asked form tutors to insist that all students get out their phones and turn them off at the beginning of the day during Smart Start so that we can be sure that all phones are switched off.

Therefore, to avoid blurring the lines when students need to get their phones out in the dinner queue to use their QR code, an order has been placed for replacement key fobs for all students. This will come into full force after Easter, by which time any student who does not have their key fob to purchase lunch, will need to go to the back of the queue and use their PIN code to keep the queue running smoothly and efficiently. After Easter, QR codes on phones will NO LONGER be a legitimate purchasing method. Until then, students without fobs should only switch on their phones to access the QR code as they get near the till; students found with their phones out and switched on any earlier than that, will have their phones confiscated.

Furthermore, until now, we have said that confiscated phones can be collected by students at 3.25 pm if it was a first infringement. However, from now on, students will have to wait for a parent/carer to collect it for them from Reception on a day convenient for the parent/carer. This is quite a big modification to our practice, and I would urge you to discuss the ramifications of your child having their phone confiscated before it ever happens. Students who infringe for a second time will have to give in their phones to the office when they arrive at school and collect them at the end of the day for a designated length of time, a procedure which has been used successfully with several students already.

There may still be occasions when staff ask students to use their phones in lesson time if they wish and this will obviously continue but be strictly supervised.

For the most part, our students are very responsible in their use of mobile phones, and we are happy for them to switch them back on for their journey home at the end of school. Thank you as ever for your support in this important matter.

Yours faithfully

Paul Jennings
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