

26 September 2024

Dear Parents and carers,

It has been an excellent start to the academic year at Fitzharrys. We are really proud of the focus and engagement that students show in their lessons. We have also seen a continued calm and polite atmosphere around site, with wonderful support for our new year 7 students who have settled in superbly.

As part of this students have, in the vast majority of cases, adhered carefully to our expectations around mobile phones. Our simple rule of 'see it, hear it, lose it' is well understood and followed. We are aware that there are some places in school where students can look at phones without us knowing, yet the overall culture is one where students are interacting directly with their peers and not focussed on their screens. We are aware of the impact of mobile phones on mental health and wellbeing, and our policy supports this reduction of the impact of mobile devices. We also continue to educate our students about the benefits and risks of mobile devices through our PSHE schemes of learning.

The one exception to this principle has been that teachers have been able to ask students to use their phones in lesson for the purposes of learning. Whilst not used all the time, we have noticed that this practice can have a negative impact on students.

Firstly, we are aware that there is not an even access to mobile phones for all students. This may be due to data limits, device type, cost of devices, or the choice not to have a mobile phone. Therefore, some students are disadvantaged in their learning experience in the classroom.

Secondly, if and when devices are used as part of the lesson, in some instances they have not been used for the purpose outlined by teachers. Students can use this as an opportunity to message each other and check social media. In addition, we have seen some rare cases of online bullying through pictures and videos being taken of students and staff, which can then be circulated.

Following a careful review of the benefits of this approach against the limitations, we have decided to adjust our policy on mobile phone use in the classroom. From Monday 30th September students will no longer be permitted to use their mobile phones in the classroom for learning. Staff will no longer invite their use. Any student on their phone in a lesson will have it confiscated under the 'see it, hear it, lose it' rule.

The only exceptions to this will be a small number of specific learning activities in computer rooms where there are not enough computers for a class to carry out short activities. Examples of this would be Bedrock sessions in the library, BTEC music, and KS4 revision sessions in the Science computer room. In these cases, a small group of students will be invited to use their devices to access specific applications; this will be carefully supervised. In addition, JMF6 students will be allowed access when invited by their teacher.

We are fully aware that there are many useful apps and resources that are available online and through mobile devices, laptops, and PCs. We are working hard to increase our capacity to let students use these technologies through school devices. This will, in time, reduce the need for any mobile phone use in school.

However, we also know that when in school, the expertise and guidance of the teachers has the highest impact on our young people. We anticipate that this update to our approach to mobile phone use will help further increase the focus on learning in lessons and ensure equal access to learning.

Yours sincerely,



Will Speke  
Headteacher