



ASPIRATIONS

ACCEPTABLE USE OF MOBILE PHONES POLICY

Oak Hill Academy West London

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Introduction

Mobile phone technology has advanced significantly over the last few years - and it continues to evolve. Wireless connections in particular have extended the capabilities of mobile phones, enabling access to a wide range of new content and services globally. Many phones now offer Internet and email access, alongside the most often standard functions of messaging, camera, video and sound recording.

Mobile phones, alongside other forms of technology are changing the way and speed in which we communicate. They can provide security and reassurance; however, there are also associated risks. Children and young people need to understand these risks in order to help them develop appropriate strategies for keeping themselves safe. As with e-safety issues generally, risks to children and young people can be broadly categorised under the headings of content, contact and conduct and managed by reducing availability, restricting access and increasing resilience.

Aim

The aim of the Mobile Phone Policy is to promote safe and appropriate practice through establishing clear and robust acceptable use guidelines.

This is achieved through balancing protection against potential misuse with the recognition that mobile phones are effective communication tools - which in turn can contribute to safeguarding practice and protection.

Scope

This policy applies to all individuals who have access to personal or work-related mobile phones on site. This includes staff, volunteers, children, young people, parents/ carers, visitors and community users. This list is not exhaustive.

Policy statement

It is recognised that it is the enhanced functions of many mobile phones that cause the most concern, and which are most susceptible to misuse. Misuse includes the taking and distribution of indecent images, exploitation and bullying.

It is also recognised that mobile phones can cause an unnecessary distraction during the working day and can be intrusive when used in the company of others.

When mobile phones are misused it can impact on an individual's dignity, privacy and right to confidentiality. Such concerns are not exclusive to children and young people; hence there is a duty to protect the needs and vulnerabilities of all.

It is appreciated that it can be very difficult to detect when such devices are present or being used, particularly in relation to enhanced functions, such as cameras. The use of all mobile phones is therefore limited, regardless of their capabilities. The aim is to avoid distraction and disruption of the working day, and to minimise the opportunities for any individual to make any covert images or misuse functions in any other way.

Designated 'mobile free' areas are situated within the academy are

- Changing areas – (classrooms whilst children are changing for activities)
- Toilets
- EYFS Areas

A zero-tolerance policy is in place with regards to the use of personal or work-related mobiles by any individual in these areas.

Code of conduct

A code of conduct is promoted with the aim of creating a cooperative workforce, where staff work as a team, have high values and respect each other; thus creating a strong morale and sense of commitment leading to increased productivity.

It is therefore ensured that all staff:

- have a clear understanding of what constitutes misuse.
- are vigilant and alert to potential warning signs.
- know how to minimise risk.
- avoid putting themselves into compromising situations which could be misinterpreted and lead to possible allegations.
- understand the need for professional boundaries and clear guidance regarding acceptable use.
- are responsible for self-moderation of their own behaviours.
- are aware of the importance of reporting concerns promptly.

It is fully recognised that studies consistently indicate that imposing rigid regulations and/or 'bans' on the actions of others can be counterproductive, leading to a culture of suspicion, uncertainty and secrecy.

The imposition of rigorous, inflexible rules is therefore avoided, unless the potential risks of not enforcing them far outweigh the benefits. An agreement of trust is therefore promoted regarding the carrying and use of mobile phones within the academy, which is agreed to by all staff.

Procedures

Personal mobiles

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.

In the interests of equality, and to further promote safety, the guidance applies to any individual who has a mobile phone on site, including students / pupils, parents and visitors, as detailed below:

Staff, Volunteers and Student Teachers are permitted to have their mobile phones in the academy; however, there is a clear expectation that all personal use is limited to allocated lunch and/or tea breaks and non-contact times. Other than in agreed

exceptional circumstances, phones must be secured out of sight, switched off and calls and texts must not be taken or made during lesson time.

All staff must ensure that their mobile telephones/devices are stored away throughout contact time with children. Staff bags should be placed in a secure place within the classroom or in their personal locker. Mobile phone calls may only be taken at staff breaks or in staff members' own time. The use of mobile phones during teaching time is strictly forbidden. No member of staff should have their mobile phone with them whilst teaching except in circumstances where they have been granted permission by a member of the SLT.

Lockers are provided for staff use and should be used to store personal belongings such as phones. See the office for further details. If staff have a personal emergency they are free to use the school's phone or make a personal call from their mobile in the office or the staff room.

Staff, Volunteers and Student Teachers are not permitted, in any circumstance, to use their phones for taking, recording or sharing images of pupils.

Staff, Volunteers and Student Teachers are not permitted to use their own personal phones for contacting children, young people and their families within or outside of the academy unless authorised by a member of the SLT.

Parents/carers, visitors and contractors are respectfully requested not to use their mobile phones in any of the designated mobile free areas. Should phone calls and/or texts need to be taken or made, use is restricted to those areas not accessed by children in order to avoid any unnecessary disturbance or disruption to others. Under no circumstances is **any individual** permitted to take images or make recordings on a mobile phone. Any individual bringing a personal device into the academy must ensure that it contains no inappropriate or illegal content.

Work mobile

The use of a designated work mobile is promoted as it is:

- an essential part of the emergency toolkit which is taken on off-site trips;
- an effective communication aid, enabling text, email messages and calls to be made and received; and
- a back-up facility should problems be experienced with the landline – or where contact needs to be made outside of work hours.

Effective security measures are in place to safeguard against any potential misuse. Only authorised individuals have access to the work mobile, stored securely when not in use.

Personal calls are not permitted to be made on the work mobile, other than in agreed exceptional circumstances. Contact or calls can be made via the work mobile in the event of an emergency. All calls are logged.

The work mobile is clearly labelled as such, and additional features such as cameras are disabled or not used.

Driving

If any practitioner is required to drive in a working capacity, and has responsibility for the work mobile, the phone must be switched off whilst driving. It is expected that staff follow the same procedures regarding their own personal mobile phones.

Under no circumstances should staff drive whilst taking a phone call. This also applies to handsfree and wireless connections, which are considered a distraction rather than a safer alternative.

Safe storage

A designated safe and secure area for staff to store their personal belongings during the working day is available. Staff have the option to store their mobile phones in this area, should they choose.

Staff leave their belongings in safe storage at their own risk. It is therefore recommended that phones are security marked, password protected and insured. No liability for loss and damages is accepted.

As well as safeguarding children and avoiding any unnecessary disruptions during the day, this procedure also aims to protect staff against any unfounded allegations.

Emergency contact

It is recognised that mobile phones provide direct contact to others, and at times provide a necessary reassurance due to their ease of access, particularly at stressful times. Staff, therefore, **in agreed (by the Principal) exceptional circumstances** would be permitted to keep the volume of their phone switched on. This is to enhance their own well-being and peace of mind, to reduce stress and worry and to enable them to concentrate more effectively on their work.

Such use will be for **an agreed limited period only**, until any concerns or issues leading to the exceptional circumstance request have been resolved.

It is ensured at all times that the landline telephone remains connected and operational, except in circumstances beyond control. This means that it is available for emergency/urgent contact at all times. The reliance on an answer phone is avoided and only used in exceptional circumstances. If used, the answer phone is always checked promptly on opening or return.

It is the responsibility of all members of staff to be vigilant and report any concerns to the Principal or SLT. Concerns will be taken seriously, logged and investigated appropriately (see Allegations against a Member of Staff Policy).