St. Helen's Primary School Policy
Use of Mobile Phones in School – December 2023

While mobile phones and personal communication devices are commonplace in today's society, it is recognised that personal mobile phones have the potential to be used inappropriately.

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.

Most mobile phones now offer Internet and email access, alongside 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. Safeguarding of children within the school is paramount.

School staff:

Staff may wish to have their personal mobile phones at work for use in case of emergencies, however there is a clear expectation that all personal use is limited to areas and times when there are no children present, or likely to be present, and no staff mobile phone can be connected to the school network.

- The school expects staff to lead by example. Other than in agreed exceptional circumstances, mobile phones should be switched off or on silent and left in a safe place during lesson times.

- Staff should not contact pupils or parents from their personal mobile phone in or out of school time or give their mobile phone number to pupils or parents. If a member of staff needs to make telephone contact with a pupil, a school telephone should be used. This is unless teachers are having to work from home during the coronavirus pandemic and would need to contact parents/children to check on their wellbeing or if a parent has chosen to conduct a parent consultation over the phone – in this instance, staff would need to precede any phone call with a blocking system so their phone number is not shared with parents/carers.

- Staff should never send to, or accept from, colleagues or pupils, texts or images that could be viewed as inappropriate.

- Staff are not permitted to take photos or videos of pupils. If photos or videos are being taken as part of the school curriculum or for a professional capacity, staff may use personal devices as long as they delete any images immediately after they have been uploaded to the school system. Photo permissions are always checked before taking any images. Staff should not allow themselves to be photographed by a pupil(s).

- In circumstances such as outings and off-site visits, staff will agree with their Line Manager the appropriate use of personal mobile phones in the event of an emergency.

Pupils:

Primary - Pupils are dissuaded from bringing mobile phones to school. If it is deemed necessary for a pupil to bring a mobile phone to school, (e.g. in the case of older pupils because they travel to and from school independently), then the expectation is that the pupil hands their phone in to the class teacher. All pupil phones will be stored securely in the school office and returned to children at the end of the day. All pupils bringing a phone to school will need to have completed an agreement with the school.

Parents, visitors and contractors:

Parents, visitors and contractors are respectfully requested not to use their mobile phones at all on the school site/in any area where children/young people are present. Should phone calls and/or texts need to be taken or made, use is restricted to those areas not accessed by children to avoid any unnecessary disturbance or disruption to others.

Photos of children must not be taken without prior discussion with a member of the Senior Management Team and in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 and using the 'Use of images consent form' (please refer to the school's document "Guidance for schools and other establishments on the use of images".)

Any individual bringing a personal device into the school must ensure that it contains no inappropriate or illegal content.

Inappropriate or illegal content:

Where there is a suspicion that the material on a mobile phone may be unsuitable and may constitute evidence relating to a criminal offence, the 'Allegations of Abuse' process will be followed (please refer to the school's 'Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy').

Staff, students or volunteers remain responsible for their own property and will bear the responsibility of any losses.

Related Policies and guidance:

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy (September 2023)

Guidance for Safer Working Practice for Adults who work with Children and Young People in Education Settings (April 2020)

Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2023)

Guidance for schools and other establishments on the use of images (July 2019)

Data Protection: A toolkit for schools, DfE, (August 2018)