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Phones in school and online safety

Dear Parents and Carers,

Some of you have made the decision to give your child a phone. You will have thought carefully about this, and I am sure that you have considered both the benefits and the risks that are associated with young people having their own phone.

Our school policy is to strongly discourage children from bringing phones in to school. We do not believe it is appropriate or necessary for primary school children to carry a phone. If you have a reason to believe that it is necessary for their safety to carry a phone, please write a letter to your child's teacher explaining why they will be bringing the phone to school.

Under normal circumstances, teachers would collect phones and keep them in their desk during the school day. Because of our coronavirus restrictions, we are not able to do this. If children bring a phone to school, it must be switched off as long as they are on the school premises, kept in their bag or tray all day, and not touched by anyone else. We cannot accept responsibility for loss or damage to phones brought in to school.

Young people use their phones to communicate with each other in all sorts of ways – very rarely just to make old-fashioned voice calls to each other. Text messages, photos and videos are the predominant forms of communication. Group chats and social media platforms are constantly buzzing with activity. Children don't just send messages to each other, they share links to things they have found, or they pass on messages they have received. Through apps such as Tik Tok they open up links to users all over the world, some of whom unfortunately share highly unpleasant images or videos.

It is important to teach children that online contacts are not necessarily who they claim to be. Cute pictures of kittens are sometimes used to trick people into clicking on links that take them to quite nasty places. Your children must feel confident to come and tell you if that happens, so that you can offer them reassurance and support.



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It is impossible to police children's phone activities 24 hours a day, but we strongly recommend that parents and carers take a very active role in supervising their children's phone accounts. It is important to set firm ground rules and to stick to them consistently. Children should appreciate that the phone is a privilege that should not be taken for granted. If they use it unwisely or unsafely, parents should be prepared to take it away. This article on theschoolrun.com has some helpful suggestions.

The most common problem we encounter in school is when children send unpleasant messages to other children, or when they post unpleasant comments about other children in a group. Simply excluding someone from a group can be very hurtful. Messages are not always written. Sometimes they are filmed "selfies". Sometimes, there is not even a message, just an unpleasant image or weblink.

Children have a choice whether to share their phone number with others, but this is not a reliable defence against phone abuse. Sometimes children feel pressured into giving out their number. Sometimes they want to be accepted into a popular group. Sometimes a trusted friend might pass on their number without their permission.

We rely on parents to work with school in partnership. We teach children to treat each other with respect, and to use the same rules when communicating online. It is important for them to know that their parents will check up on the way they use their phone. As school staff, we do not have the right to look through the contents of a child's phone, but as parents, you do. Your children may not want to tell you if they have received distressing messages, and they will certainly not tell you if they have sent distressing messages to someone else. If you notice your child becoming withdrawn or moody or tearful, these may be signs that they are being bullied or abused.

If you become aware of any inappropriate phone usage, it is important for you to talk calmly and supportively with your child about this. You are not snooping, or prying into their affairs. You are doing your best to keep them safe and help them deal with some of the challenges of growing up in the digital age.

Please let your child's teacher know if you become aware of inappropriate behaviour online. We cannot stop it from happening, but we can redouble our efforts to teach children about the dangers to their own safety and mental health and about ways to seek help when they need it.

Check our [E-Safety page](#) on the website for more useful information and links.

Yours faithfully,



Adam Barber

Headteacher