

Oaklands Catholic School and Sixth Form College

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Edith Stein Catholic Academy Trust
(A Company Limited by Guarantee)

Registered in England and Wales, Company No 07721932

Headteacher: Matthew Quinn B.Ed (Hons), M.A., NPQH

Our Ref: MQ/SM

23 February 2024

Dear Parents and Carers

At the start of this week the Government has issued new guidance on restricting the use of internet enabled (smart) mobile phones in school; this has been widely reported on in the national news. A significant number of students have already asked if I intend to implement a complete ban on smart phones. Several parents have also been in contact to express their views on the new guidance.

In 2007 we implemented a policy for students in Years 7 to 11 that permitted students to have a phone in school on the strict condition that that these should not be seen or heard between 8.50am and 3.25pm during the school day. An abridged version of this same policy is published in the Oaklands News once a year and the policy is reinforced with students.

The policy makes it clear that if a student's phone is seen or used without specific permission from a member of staff, it will be confiscated. This accords with one of the options provided to schools in the latest official guidance. Most students understand the sensible and pragmatic position the school has taken and abide by these rules and there are very few incidences where a mobile phone interrupts a lesson. The recent statutory guidance is helpful in reinforcing the authority of schools to confiscate phones when a student contravenes these policies. These same policies also include the expectation that parents and students refrain from communicating during the school day via phones.

We have always believed that an outright ban of phones is impractical. Equally, a 'handing in' or surrendering of phones at the start of the school day is impractical and bureaucratic to say the least. Our policy reflects the realities of the school's modern context; many of our students have bus passes on their smart phones or use contactless payments for transport and to purchase items in the school canteen. In addition, a substantial number of our students have lengthy journeys home and having a phone provides security for them and parents.

In addition, there is also the wider concern about phone use by children and the harmful content they can access. Education in the responsible use of mobile devices starts at home; the environment where children spend most of their time. To augment the responsibility of parents and carers, our Personal Development curriculum addresses issues related to the use of mobile technologies. If you are concerned that your child is accessing inappropriate content or misusing social media, then our advice is to remove the device.

Finally, most parents are paying, either directly or indirectly, for the phone contract so should be able to exercise a degree of control. If you do not want your child to have a phone during the school day, please ensure they leave it at home.

Our policy for the use of mobile phones can be found on the school website by following [this link](#).
In light of the recent publicity, you may wish to go through this with your son or daughter.

Thank you for your support.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matthew Quinn". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Mr M Quinn
Headteacher