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12th September 2024

Dear Parents and Guardians,

I hope you are well, and you and your families enjoyed the summer break.

As part of our ongoing efforts to provide the best possible learning environment for students, we are continuing to develop our policy regarding the use of mobile phones on school premises, as we start the new academic year.

Mobile phones have become an integral part of our daily lives, providing convenience and connectivity. However, there are a great many benefits to our school community in having clear expectations around mobile phones that all pupils and staff understand and consistently follow.

First, it is a top priority of ours that we provide the best learning in our school. But we know that the mere presence of phones cause distractions. Our teachers are there to teach and our students are there to learn, and this will happen best when everyone’s attention is focused fully on learning.

Secondly, we have shared important research from the Department for Education (DfE) with students to educate them on the impact of mobile phone use on their mental health, wellbeing and learning. The information shared is enclosed at the bottom of my letter. By creating clear expectations that phones will not be used, seen or heard at Cliff Park, we will create a learning environment where students will not be exposed to the negative risks that phones can pose to their safety and wellbeing.

Thirdly, our staff will also be free from any distraction of dealing with mobile phone related issues at school. This will stop the rising trend of people in some schools being filmed without their permission and then shared on social media.

The DfE recently published (January 2024) non-statutory guidance to schools that we have used to develop, implement and maintain an effective mobile phone policy at Cliff Park Ormiston Academy. The intention of this guidance, and our policy, has been to continue to foster a calm, safe and supportive school environment that allows us to deliver high-quality teaching every lesson, alongside prioritising our students’ safety and wellbeing.

Despite this, there continue to be regular instances where mobile phones are being used in our academy. At the end of last year we re-set the expectation that mobile phones are never used, seen or heard during school hours.

In re-setting this expectation, I have informed students that if their phone is used, seen or heard that the phone will be confiscated and will be returned directly to parents. We will monitor the impact of this policy and in the future, we may also request that mobile phones are handed in on arrival to the academy. We firmly believe it is in the best interest of our students' educational experience and personal development that we have a clear and consistent expectation about phones at our school.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us. Thank you for your understanding and ongoing support as we strive to create an excellent learning environment for every student, every lesson at Cliff Park.

Your faithfully

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Harry French

Principal

**Impact of mobile phones on learning:**

* The presence of a smart phone affects attention and concentration, impacting learning and recall [of knowledge]
* It can take up to 20 minutes for students to refocus on what they were learning after receiving a notification on their device
* Young people exposed to more than 2 hours of screen time on smart phones per day have worse working memory, processing speed, attention levels, language skills and executive function compared to those who do not.

**Impact of mobile phones on mental health & wellbeing:**

* Research shows there has been an increase in major depression (145% in girls / 161% in boys) since 2010 when smart phones were introduced.
* Rates of self-harm have tripled and rates of suicide have increased by 91% in boys and 167% in girls since 2010
* There has been a 52% Increase in screen time between 2020 and 2022, with 25% of young people using mobile phones in a way that is consistent with behavioural addiction. (For example, finding it difficult to control the amount of time spent on the phone and using the phone to the detriment of other enjoyable activities).