WEST LONDON FREE SCHOOL

Mobile Phone Policy

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Introduction

This policy should be read in conjunction with the school's Pupil ICT and Social Media Acceptable Use Policy and the school's Behaviour, Anti-Bullying, Rewards, Appearance and Uniform policy. The School believes that it is beneficial for pupils to spend time in school learning in lessons and building their communication skills. In addition, the School firmly believes that it is in the interest of pupils' good mental health and well-being not to be given a smartphone until absolutely necessary, and then to limit and closely monitor their use to protect them from harm. The Policy has been created with all of these beliefs in mind.

Policy for Years 7 - 11

Pupils in Years 7-11 are not permitted to bring a smartphone (or smartwatch) on to the school sight, on trips (including residential) or fixtures.

The WLFS makes a distinction between two different types of device.

- Basic phones – a device which is limited to making phone calls and sending and receiving text messages and does not have access to the internet nor a camera.

- Smartphone – a device which does have access to a camera and the internet. We include in this definition other internet enabled devices, such as a smartwatch.

Pupils in Years 7 - 11 at the WLFS are not permitted to bring a smartphone onsite under any circumstances. This includes school trips and residentials. Pupils who wish to carry a mobile phone to school can do so, provided it is a basic phone (as defined by WLFS), with no access to the internet and no camera.

Rationale

The rationale for this change in approach to smartphones is threefold:

1. There is conclusive evidence that prolonged smartphone use has a detrimental effect on children's mental health, causing feelings of anxiety, loneliness and depression.
2. Despite our best efforts to prevent their use, pupils will still use smartphones on site to take pictures, make recordings, and communicate during the school day.
3. Pupils travelling to and from school with smartphones are at increased risk of being the victims of theft and violent crime.

Of these three reasons, by far the most important is the first.

Smartphones are a fact of modern life, and we want WLFS pupils to develop a healthy relationship with smartphones which allows them to enjoy their many benefits. However, such a relationship must be time-limited. Experts such as the psychologists Jonathan Haidt and Jean Twenge have demonstrated beyond doubt that prolonged smartphone usage is making children less happy and more depressed (see further reading below).

We believe it is our moral duty as a school to do what we can to limit children's smartphone use. This policy is designed to give WLFS pupils an enforced break from their smartphones not just whilst at school, but also whilst travelling to and from school. This will help WLFS pupils limit their smartphone usage to a healthy amount of 1-2 hours each day.

Consequences

The consequences for pupils who use a phone on the school site depend upon the type of device being used.

Basic phone: pupils are permitted to have a basic phone on the school site, but it must be switched off and kept in their bag.

- If a pupil's basic phone is used, visible, or heard during the school day, it will be confiscated for one week. This includes the phone's SIM card.

- The device will be kept in a safe in the Heads of Year office and can be collected by the pupil at the end of the school day one week later.

Smartphone: pupils are not permitted to bring a smartphone onsite under any circumstances.

- If a pupil's smartphone is used, visible, or heard during the school day, or there is any reason to suspect a pupil has brought a smartphone on site, it will be confiscated for six weeks inclusive of holidays. This includes the phone's SIM card.

- The device will be kept in a safe in the Heads of Year office and can be collected by the pupil at the end of the school day six weeks later.

The period of confiscation includes half-term, and the winter and spring holidays. For the summer holiday, phones will be returned to pupils on the final day of term, on the condition that the remainder of the confiscation period will continue in the new school year.

Bag Searches

There will be occasions where a member of staff is required to search a pupil's personal belongings to look for a smartphone. All such searches will be done in accordance with Department for Education guidance on searching and screening, and with reference to searches and screening as explained elsewhere in this policy.

Recommended basic phones for taking to school:

There are three models of basic phone that we recommend for pupils who wish to bring a phone to and from school: Nokia 105, Samsung E1200 or Alcatel 10.16G. These can all be bought for a fraction of the cost of a smartphone and used on a pay-as-you-go basis.

Nokia 105

Samsung E1200

Alcatel 10.16G

Sixth Form Students

This restriction on smartphones does not apply to Sixth Form students. They are permitted to bring a smartphone into school. However, it must not be used in lessons.

If a Sixth Form student's smartphone (or smart watch) is used, visible, or heard during a lesson, it will be confiscated and returned the following day.

Separate ICT Acceptable Use policies apply to pupils and staff.

Policy for the Sixth Form

Pupils in the Sixth Form (Years 12-13) are permitted to bring mobile phones into school but are not permitted to use them in lessons or in any manner which interferes with the learning of any other student in the common room or shared study areas. Sixth Form pupils may not use their mobile phones whilst at the Palingswick House site. Guidance on phone use for Sixth Formers is given at the point of entry to the Sixth Form.

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