

NOTES OF THE PARENT FOCUS GROUP MEETING 15 JUNE 2017

In attendance, P Doig, D Gallimore

The meeting was dedicated to discussing the school's current mobile phone policy which is due for renewal and a copy of which had been circulated prior to the meeting.

Since the last policy was written in 2013, technology and the use of mobile phones has changed considerably. It was generally acknowledged that the use of mobile phones can have some really positive benefits in school. Examples quoted are in teaching and learning – particularly practical subjects when taking photos can help show progress of projects. The issues seem to arise when mobile phones are used inappropriately.

The debate provoked views from different ends of the spectrum with regard to the use of phones in schools. Matters arising from subsequent discussion are as follows:

- 1 Social media. This can be used for really great things but it is about teaching students how to set boundaries. Also parents do not know what their children are using their phones for.
- 2 It was confirmed that phones are handed in for exams so students do not have them on their person, the consequences of being found with a mobile phone in a formal exam are harsh.
- 3 It was generally agreed that it is up to parents to monitor the usage of their child's phone so that they know what their child is doing.
- 4 More information should be shared with both parents and students about what the law is. Students may think twice if they think they would be breaking the law and their actions might be a criminal offence.
- 5 One particular parent felt that the school should view phones as targeted technology, using them in a controlled way. Without control, we do not know what the students are doing in school time which may put the school at risk.
- 6 Our policy should be consistently implemented, all staff following the procedure.
- 7 One parent raised the policy at another school and brought in a copy of the policy for discussion. The policy is particularly strict as once the child enters the building the phone should be stored in a locker/bag and out of sight until the end of school. If it is used, it will be confiscated and returned at the end of the week. This is because parents at this school believe mobile phones are a distraction. As much as those present at this meeting had some sympathy with this approach, it was felt a little harsh for Crossley Heath at the present time, although it was agreed that parameters should be agreed and implemented more rigorously.
- 8 It was recommended that our policy should refer to permission for photos/videos before anything is uploaded by a student. Reference was made to another school who have a policy that no-one in their uniform should appear on any social media platform.
- 9 A phased usage was suggested by one parent – ie students not allowed them in school in KS3, some usage in KS4 and more freedoms in KS5.
- 10 Phones can lead to competition amongst students and there is pressure from parents to have the latest gadgets if they are 'required' for use in the classroom.

- 11 Some parents would feel concerned that they could not contact their child during the school day if usage was completely removed, including lunchtimes.
- 12 One particular parent felt strongly that phones are simply a distraction and claimed that research suggests that those schools who removed them performed better with enhanced exam results as students are more focused.

After much debate the following was considered a fair way forward.

- 1 The policy to include reference to watches and other devices
- 2 To include reference to permission for uploading photos and videos
- 3 Students to keep phones out of sight on corridors and the dining room.
- 4 The use of phones during form time is questionable and should only be with permission of the form tutor.
- 5 The use of phones in lessons is possible with permission for specific projects.
- 6 Students to use phones at lunchtime (possibly break) when out of the building, or in a classroom with permission when it is an 'in day'
- 7 Students and parents to be notified about the policy and consequences explained
- 8 All staff to enforce the policy for consistency so no loopholes appear.

It was generally agreed that information should be shared with parents – perhaps at new intake evening, or parents' information evenings.

Thank you to all parents who were able to share their views about the school mobile phone policy, either at the meeting, or separately by email.

D Gallimore
20 June 2017