



WALTON HIGH

Leading Learning

Walnut Tree Campus: Fyfield Barrow Milton Keynes MK7 7WH

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Principal – Brooklands Andrew Bennett
Principal – Walnut Tree Sharon Alexander

Executive Principal Michelle Currie

Chair of Governors Ayser Asif
Business Manager Sukh Singh

19 July 2023

Dear Parents,

Following consultation with our staff and governors, we are writing to inform you of our intention to change the policy on mobile phones at Walton High from September 2023. There has been an ongoing national debate over the use of mobile phones in schools and a number of Milton Keynes secondary schools have recently stopped their use within their premises.

There are a number of research studies around the use of mobile phones within schools. The Children's Society has found that the average age for children getting a smart phone is 10 years old, with 61% then setting up their first social media account before the legal age of 13. Nearly half of children are using social media for more than three hours a day despite these users being the most vulnerable in terms of anxiety and depression.

Apple's own research has shown that children unlock their phone 80 times a day whilst Dscout found that they tap, type or swipe their devices 2,600 times a day. Additionally, the London School of Economics have found that test scores of 16-year olds improve by 6.4% when mobile phones are not used within the school which equates to a week of extra education over an academic year.

Our internal research shows that mobile phones play a significant part in unkindness to fellow students, especially on social media, and overall, they have a negative impact on behaviour.

We have now taken the decision that mobile phones, earphones, headphones, smart watches and other similar devices with internet connectivity must not be used, seen or heard on the school premises. Please see our FAQs section below for more details on the application of this policy. We believe this step will foster greater positive social interaction amongst our students, particularly at break and lunchtimes. It will also improve their wellbeing and academic performance.

We expect that parents will see this as a positive step and support us in the implementation of this policy from September.

Kind regards

Andy Bennett – Brooklands Campus

Sharon Alexander – Walnut Tree Campus

FAQs

What does this change in approach mean in practice?

- From the start of the Autumn term, students can bring a mobile phone into the school, but it must be switched off and stored in their bag (not their pocket) before entering the school gate at each campus.
- Headphones, earphones, smart watches and other similar electronic devices with internet connectivity must also be removed and stored in a school bag (not in their pocket).
- Mobile phones and the other devices listed above must then remain switched off and out of sight at all times on the school site, including break and lunchtime.

My child is diabetic and needs their phone on them to monitor blood sugars -are they exempt?

- Yes, students who use their phones for medical reasons will be exempt – we know who these students are and will continue to support their needs. Students will be expected to have their phones silent and out of sight.

What will happen if a student's mobile phone is used, seen or heard?

- The device will be confiscated and stored securely in Student Services.
- On the first confiscation, students can collect the device from Student Services between 3pm and 4pm.
- On the second confiscation, students will again be allowed to collect the device from Student Services between 3pm and 4pm but parents will also be notified of the incident.
- For the third and subsequent confiscations the device will be available for parents to collect from reception between 3.30pm and 4.30pm.
- Any defiance towards staff when a phone is confiscated will lead to further escalation in line with the school's behaviour policy.

What if my child needs to contact me during the day?

- If there is an emergency, students should go to Student Services who will be able to assist them by telephoning you.

What if I need to contact my child?

- Please telephone reception in an emergency on 01908 677954 or email feedback@mket.org.uk and urgent messages will be passed on to your child.

What about after school clubs and activities?

- If your child attends an after-school club or activity they will be allowed to use their phone outside the building after school if they need to arrange to be picked up.

What about trips and fixtures?

- We recognise that being able to contact parents regarding return times is essential, and that many parents will want to retain regular contact with their child on residential visits. Students will normally be free to use their mobile phone at the trip leader's discretion.

What about using mobile phones for learning in lessons?

- The vast majority of activities that teachers have instructed students to use phones for previously can easily be achieved in other ways; therefore, phones are also not to be used, seen or heard in lessons.
- In the exceptional event that the use of a mobile phone is considered to be absolutely necessary to support learning, the member of staff will give students prior notice.

What are the rules for Post 16 students?

- Post 16 students are able to use their mobile phones whilst in the designated study areas only. These will be clearly identified to Post 16 students at the start of term.
- In the exceptional event that the use of a mobile phone is considered to be absolutely necessary to support learning, the member of staff will give students prior notice.
- Any other instance of a Post 16 student using a mobile phone, or other device, will result in the device being confiscated following the above procedure.

Our aim is that all students will follow our expectations giving no cause for confiscations to occur.