

LANCASTER ROYAL GRAMMAR SCHOOL

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September 2022

Dear Year 7 - 10 Parents and Carers,

As we've made some updates to our pupil mobile phone and digital device policy, I wanted to write to point out some of these changes, highlight some common concerns you may want to be aware of, and to sign post some websites for parents which you may want to look at.

Changes to the Policy

In brief we have made two changes to the policy for September 2022:

1. The school still operate a next day return on confiscated devices, however if your son has his phone confiscated on a Friday, he can now pick it up at 3.30pm from the City View office as long as he hands it back in on Monday morning, we'll keep it Monday night instead.
2. Year 10 pupils will now continue to have the same restrictions and rules as the lower school. Year 11 and Sixth Form pupils have more privileges.

The full version of the policy can be found on the school policies page under the parents' section of the website.

Common Issues to Bear in Mind

I hope that some of the comments below will help you understand some of the common issues and concerns we have regarding mobile phone use in school. Hopefully they will help you with any conversations you have with your son.

- Your son doesn't need the latest smart phone for school. The vast majority of pupils have very modest models often handed down from parents.
- Confiscation rates in Year 7 & 8 are extremely low and gradually rise in Year 9.
- Mobile phones are not a substitute for a watch. We don't accept "I'm just checking the time" to be a valid excuse for using their phone so please make sure your son has a wristwatch. Smart watches are not permitted in school.
- A phone will be confiscated if it 'accidentally' goes off, so please encourage your son to get into good habits of turning his phone off and putting it in his bag as he arrives at school. You could also teach him to use the scheduled 'do not disturb' feature on iOS or Android.

- The school encourage parents to set up parental controls, content restrictions and screentime limits on their son's devices – you can learn to use these features on both iOS and Android.
- The most serious online issues we come across for the younger pupils have involved WhatsApp in recent years, especially where pupils join large groups where harmful or upsetting content can be shared. Please be mindful of the age restrictions on social media platforms for example you need to be 16+ to sign up for WhatsApp. Young people will need parental permission to access these sites under the minimum age so you will need to consider how you'll take responsibility if you choose to do this.
- 'Unofficial' LRGS accounts and groups are problematic and not permitted, for example an 'Unofficial 7G' WhatsApp group. Sometimes pupils set them up innocently to make friends or message about homework, but often they cause issues by excluding individuals in the class or even including parents or other adults. The school's Teams platform is a much safer place for a form group to communicate.
- The school recommend a 'no devices at night-time' rule. Handing his phone in to you and keeping it downstairs at bedtime is in your son's best interests. This is what we do in the boarding houses. Pupils who have their phones with them during the night can fall into unhealthy sleep patterns which can impact on their school day.

Information for Parents

It's a really good idea for adults to educate themselves about new technology so we can support our young people to manage their online lives. You may find the following websites helpful:

Childnet run an advice page for parents and carers:

<https://www.childnet.com/parents-and-carers/>

The Safer Internet Centre have lots of advice, including about using parental controls:

<https://saferinternet.org.uk>

The National Crime Agency run their Think You Know education site:

<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/>

I hope you find this information useful. If you have any further questions, please don't hesitate to contact the school.

With warm regards,

James

James Hallsworth

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