



Peterchurch, Herefordshire HR2 0SG | 01981 550 231 | admin@fairfield.hereford.sch.uk | Head Teacher: Mrs S L Gaston

23rd February 2017

Dear parents and carers

Mobile phone use in school

As you are aware, unlike many secondary schools that do not allow mobile phones at all, Fairfield has always taken a more flexible view of mobile phone use. We understand that students may want to listen to music on their phones on their journey to and from school, and that it is reassuring for parents to be able to contact their children by mobile when they are not in school. We simply ask that, when in school, mobile phones are switched off and in the students' bag, unless they are being used at the teacher's request in a lesson (eg as a calculator). This includes break and lunchtimes.

Unfortunately we have had an increasing number of incidents over the past few months, which have led us to reconsider this policy. In particular we are concerned about

- students using their phones during the school day to text or access the internet - sometimes even trying to do so during lessons
- students phoning home on their mobiles during the day without the knowledge or permission of a member of staff
- students using their phones during the school day to contact or even harass others using social media sites
- students filming each other at break or lunchtimes and posting content on social media sites
- attempts to misuse the school's wifi and servers, in breach of the Acceptable Use Policy signed by all students

If students need to contact home at any point in the school day, they can do so from the school office. Please do not try to phone your child during the day - parents and carers should phone the school office if they need to contact their child, and we will pass on a message.

We spend significant amounts of time teaching internet safety, appropriate use of social media, and warning about the dangers and legality of sexting, grooming and maintaining privacy on the internet. In addition, almost every parent and carer I speak to expresses concerns about the amount of time their child spends on the internet or playing computer games, especially interactive games which can make students vulnerable to grooming of all kinds, including radicalisation and sexual exploitation. We will continue to involve external agencies in drawing attention to these concerns and will be arranging a meeting for parents to offer support in trying to tackle some of these issues together.

In the meantime, we intend to apply the existing policy with more vigour and will insist that mobile phones are switched off and in bags during the school day. If a student is found using a mobile phone, it will be confiscated by a member of staff and taken to the school office, where it will be kept securely until the end of the day. The student may collect it at 3.25pm; if it is confiscated a second time then we will retain it until a parent or carer collects it.

We hope you will support us in allowing our students to have a mobile-free school day. Please talk to your child about the importance of adhering to these simple rules and not arguing with staff if they are found to be in breach of them. We would also ask you to consider the impact of significant amounts of “screen time” at home on your child’s academic progress. Students do not need unlimited access to the internet 24/7; many parents I speak to are using the parental controls on their home wifi to limit access after a set time in the evening, or are asking for phones/tablets to be left downstairs, or are taking away the X Box or Playstation controllers when there is homework or revision to be done and so on.

We understand that especially in a rural area, a mobile phone, tablet or laptop is a great way for teenagers to stay in touch with each other and feel less isolated; is a great resource for homework and information and is part of the world in which we all live. Our view at Fairfield has always been that we want students to learn to use technology responsibly, to enhance their lives. We would like to do that in partnership with you and hope you will support us.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sue Gaston". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Sue Gaston
Head Teacher