



Bishop Wordsworth's School

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Head Master: Dr S D Smallwood BSc (Hons) PhD NPQH

10 January 2019

Dear Parents

I am writing to request your strongest possible support with a change of our school rules with regard to the use of mobile electronic devices on school premises. From next Monday 14 January 2019 boys in Years 7-11 will no longer be permitted to have a device of this sort switched on whilst they are on school premises. This will include 'phones, games consoles, apple watch or any other mobile device other than a laptop or tablet under direct staff supervision. All such devices MUST be switched off entirely – ie they cannot just be switched to silent or 'vibrate only' mode. Not only must the device be switched off but it must be stored out of sight so that there is no room for misinterpretation.

The reasons for this change have been a series of problems that have recently arisen in school, caused by boys misusing such equipment by illicit videoing, photography and production and/or distribution of digital materials through social media. Whilst I am entirely realistic about the pervasive nature of social media and the advanced capabilities of the technology, it seems that some boys simply don't understand the consequences of their actions in this regard, and sadly the time is now past where everyone can simply be trusted to make good decisions. The outcomes of such incidents are truly horrible with hours of investigation by staff, lots of unhappy boys and parents, and staff who feel that their professionalism is under threat. I also have to add that a minority of the materials that have been posted online have been highly offensive and the cause of distress. Such a position is simply untenable for the school.

The sanctions for misuse of mobile devices are already clearly spelt out at Annex 1 of the BWS Behaviour and Discipline Policy, but we intend to simplify and strengthen these as necessary. For ease of reference I have reproduced the relevant revised paragraphs for you below:

11. Misuse of a mobile telephone will lead to its confiscation, parents being informed and the imposition of sanctions including exclusion from school. If the offence is of a criminal nature it is to be reported to the Police.

12. The first time a mobile phone is confiscated parents are to be informed by email and the pupil is to serve a half hour after-school detention. The pupil may collect his mobile phone at the end of the school day from the relevant Pastoral Office.

13. Any further infringements of this Policy will result in the pupil being banned from bringing a mobile phone to School for a specified period of time. The pupil will also serve a one hour after-school detention.

I also need to add that any boy who is proved to have been involved in either producing or posting offensive material online will be dealt with severely under the terms of the BWS policy, as you would expect.

I will be telling the boys in a designated assembly on Friday 11 January. I would therefore be most grateful if you could talk to your son(s) about the matter over the weekend so that he (a) understands the importance of and reasons for the decision and (b) the consequences if he fails to follow the rules. If there is a need for communication between home and school then your son can easily do this via School Reception.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S D Smallwood', written in a cursive style.

S D Smallwood
Head Master