

March 6th 2017

Name:

Form:

Dear Parents

You will have no doubt heard from your son / daughter that we are considering banning the use of mobile phones on the Academy's site.

Mobile phones, headphones, iPods, MP3 players etc are not currently banned in the Academy and at present teachers can allow students access to technology as appropriate. For example – an art teacher may have accepted that when a student is getting on quietly with their individual project they may have their own music on through their headphones to help them focus. Students are also currently able to use their phones at break and lunchtimes but not between lessons or in lessons except with the permission of the class teacher. Unfortunately this is being abused. Students are putting earpieces in without permission and using their phones to send texts, look at social media sites and post / respond to posts. In addition, students walk around the Academy with headphones in which is a health and safety risk (owing to their lack of awareness of what is happening around them). Headphones dangling down from their pockets and sweaters also pose a risk.

We feel that the moment a student puts headphones in they are disengaging from what is happening around them. If this happened in lessons this would be interpreted as students opting out of learning. Obviously we want our students to fully engage in class and we also want them socially integrated with each other. Given that a partial restriction is not working, our proposal is that headphones should not be brought into the Academy. Again, we would not search for them but if they are seen they will be confiscated. On the first occasion of confiscation, students will be allowed to pick them up at the end of the day but on any subsequent occasions parents would be expected to come and collect at a time appropriate to them and the Academy.

Mobile Phones

As mobile phones become increasingly interactive the problems we deal with on a daily basis have increased. If a student bypasses our Wi-Fi access and uses their own 3G or 4G internet connection then we have no control over what they are accessing in school. In lessons, mobile phones can be used at the discretion of the teachers, for example the use of the calculator, or to do some quick research. Currently if they are seen in lessons without permission the phone is confiscated and returned to the student at the end of the day if it is a first offence. If a student breaks the rule a second time the phone is confiscated and only returned to a parent. Further offences usually result in a mobile phone ban for that student.

We could quote a number of incidents where we deal with of mobile phones being used inappropriately in the Academy, even if this is within a controlled environment. One example is photographs or videos of students being taken in an off guard moment and these pictures being sent out to others and the student ridiculed, embarrassed and upset. This is just one example of how mobile phones have contributed to the instances of misbehaviour around the Academy that can be distressing for the students involved. As you can imagine we are regularly dealing with comments about other students on social networking sites and these updates do go on during breaks and lunchtimes.

Students will say, 'we need our mobile phones to know where to meet up with our friends during the day.' Parents might worry about how they can get messages to their children during the Academy day. It does make you wonder how we ever managed when we didn't have mobile phones.

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We are not saying that students can't have their mobile phones in their bags, switched off and out of sight to aid their safety to and from the Academy. For messages during the day between parents and students (forgotten PE kits, dentist reminders etc.) then we are happy to provide the Academy office to pass on these communications as we did previously in the 'olden days.'

Our proposal is that from Monday 24th April 2017, any mobile phones seen once students have entered the Academy's grounds, until they leave at the end of the day, will be confiscated. If it is their first offence they can collect the mobile phone at the end of the day. Any subsequent occasions will mean that parents will need to come and collect the phone at their own convenience.

Any item of value is brought to the Academy at a student's own risk and although we will have systems in place to ensure that phones are confiscated efficiently we cannot take responsibility for any loss, theft or damage of the phones if a student chooses to bring them on site.

We are not the first school / Academy to take this action and we will no doubt not be the last. We do feel however that for our Academy the time has come to educate our students to become less reliant on these devices and to improve their communication and engagement skills as a result.

Consultation Response

Any parent wishing to have their views taken into account should reply by email by 4.30pm on Monday, March 13th 2017. I have set up a dedicated email address for parental responses. The address is:
mobilephones@josephleckieacademy.co.uk

If you prefer to write or if you would like to meet with me to discuss this please do let me know.

Your comments / responses will be taken into account by the governors at their meeting on Thursday, 23rd March 2017 to make a final decision regarding the change in policy.

Students' views will be gathered and considered via the Academy's Council.

Thank you for your on-going support on a wide range of matters as we work together to ensure the best possible outcomes for our children and young people.

Yours sincerely

Keith Whittlestone
Principal