17 May 2019

Dear Parents and Carers

Mobile Phone Policy

Every child deserves the very best and at Rickmansworth School our goal is to provide this for their education. We set high academic standards and ensure our students learn in an environment which develops values of respect, courtesy, consideration and tolerance. Visitors to the School often comment on the strength of our community and the opportunities available to students for socialising and out of classroom experiences. The School strives to take every opportunity to improve well-being for all.

In order to enhance this ethos, we will be trialling a ban on the use of mobile phones and headphones on the School site. This trial will run until the end of the summer term when the policy will be reviewed.

Research suggests that excessive mobile phone usage is a factor in potential mental health issues, is repeatedly associated with insomnia and general psychological distress, and contributes directly to academic underperformance. The School’s pastoral staff routinely address incidents that involve the negative use of mobile phones during School hours and/or between our students. These incidents are distressing for the students involved, often reduce the students’ capacity to learn, and bear a time cost on the teachers and staff involved in dealing with incidents.

However, Rickmansworth School recognises the importance of digital media as a learning tool - smart phones and tablets connect us with the world and offer up incredible learning opportunities.

The trial will commence on Monday 3 June 2019 and the following mobile phone rules will apply:

**Year groups 7-10:** Students will therefore be permitted to use their phone in the classroom should their teacher require it. At all other times, phones must not be seen or heard whilst on the School site.

**Year 12:** Sixth Form students will therefore be able to use their phones in the Sixth Form block, in accordance with guidance provided by Mr Eley. At all other times, phones must not be seen or heard whilst on the School site.

**PLEASE NOTE THAT DUE TO STUDY LEAVE AND REVISION FOR GCSE AND A LEVEL EXAM YEARS 11 AND 13 WILL BE EXEMPT FROM THE TRIAL.**

A useful report to read should you want further information about the impact of social media on young people can be found here:
Many other local schools have adopted the same or similar approaches towards mobile phone use. Policies such as ours are viewed as effective by leaders in education. For example the ex-head of Ofsted, Sir Michael Wilshaw states: “It’s far too distracting for children when they bring mobile phones in. Texting, sexting, all the rest of it takes place. Mobile phones go off in the classroom, disrupting lessons. Ban them.” The culture secretary, Matthew Hancock has said, “Why do young children need phones in schools? There are a number of schools across the country that simply don’t allow them. I believe that very young children don’t need to have access to social media. They are children after all. They need to be able to develop their social skills in the real world first”. “Whilst it is up to individual schools to decide rather than government, I admire [schools] who take a firm approach and do not allow mobiles to be used during the school day. I encourage more schools to look at the evidence and follow their lead.”

Students will be informed of this change during assembly time, week commencing Friday 17 May 2019. During the first week of the trial, students who do not follow this policy will be warned that they have breached the rules and no consequence will be issued. From Monday 10 June, students will be issued with a C3 detention for breaching the policy and the phone will be confiscated until the end of the day, when it can be collected from Student Reception. Repeated breaches of the policy will result in phones being confiscated until they are picked up from School Reception by a parent/carer.

We appreciate that this will be a significant change in the School experience for students and your help and support in embedding this change would be greatly appreciated.

Please do not hesitate to contact the School for further information.

Yours sincerely

Mr P Thompson
Acting Head Teacher