

# Mobile Phone and Communication Device Policy

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## 1. Introduction

The Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust (DMAT) recognises and accepts that parents/carers give their children communication devices to protect them from everyday risks involving personal security and safety. Many students travel alone on public transport, commute long distances to school and/or take part in extra-curricular activities outside of normal school hours. It is also acknowledged that, for many young people, the ownership of a mobile phone is considered to be a necessary and vital part of their social life. This is supported by the findings of a recent survey conducted within the Trust which involved parents, staff and students.

Communication devices, and in particular the new generation of smartphones, such as the iPhone and iWatch, include many additional functions such as the integrated camera, video recording capability, instant messaging, mobile office applications and mobile access to the internet. These allow immediate access to email, searching for information on the internet and access to social networking sites e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat. When used creatively and responsibly, the smartphone has great potential to support a student's learning experiences. However, the consequences of misuse can be serious.

Misuse of mobile phones/personal devices is prohibited and will be dealt with through the Trust's /Schools' Behaviour policies. Examples of misuse include, but are not limited to, the following:

- a) The deliberate engineering of situations where people's reactions are filmed or photographed in order to humiliate, embarrass or intimidate by publishing to a wider audience such as on Facebook or YouTube;
- b) Bullying by text, image and email messaging;
- c) The use of a mobile phone for 'sexting' (the deliberate taking and sending of provocative images or text messages);
- d) The posting of material on social networking sites with no thought to the risks to personal reputation and sometimes with the deliberate intention of causing harm to others;
- e) Making disrespectful comments, misrepresenting events or making defamatory remarks about teachers or other students;
- f) General disruption to learning caused by students accessing phones in lessons;
- g) Pupils phoning parents immediately following an incident so that the ability of staff to deal with it is compromised;
- h) Publishing photographs of vulnerable students who may be on a child protection plan, where this may put them at additional risk.

These guidelines outline the expectations of the DMAT on the use of communication devices by students, staff, visitors and volunteers. They also give clear guidance to staff, students and parents about the consequences of breaches of these guidelines.

## **2. All Pupils/Students**

It is the responsibility of students who bring communication devices to school to abide by the guidelines outlined in this document.

Students are advised that if they bring communication devices (or other such electronic devices) to school, they do so at their own risk. This also applies if the phone is confiscated. The security of the phone will remain the student's responsibility in all lessons, including PE/Games. In some settings, pupils have access to a locker. Additionally, phones can be handed in at the school office for safe-keeping if marked with the student's name and form.

Students are discouraged from bringing expensive items to school if it is not necessary to do so. A basic and inexpensive pay-as-you-go mobile phone is advised as the most appropriate.

In line with police advice, students are advised for personal safety reasons not to display expensive or desirable electronic items in public places, for example on the journey to and from school.

Education about responsible use of mobile technologies will be delivered by the school as part of PSHE and pastoral programmes for example. Teachers will be vigilant for the misuse of technology in bullying or as part of classroom disruption.

Students should only access the internet via school student Wi-Fi networks to ensure appropriate and relevant filtering is in place. Where students use mobile networks (for example 4G) to circumnavigate appropriate filters, permission to use personal devices may be withdrawn. All IT based applications that students use and need in college can be accessed via the free school Wi-Fi. These include ClassCharts and Show My Homework.

Mobile phone chargers must not be brought into, or used in school.

We encourage parents/carers to talk to their child about appropriate use and security

## **3. Primary Pupils**

Whilst we fully acknowledge a parent's right to allow their child to bring a mobile phone to school if they walk to and from school without adult supervision, we discourage pupils bringing communication devices to school. When a child needs to bring a phone into school, parents must provide consent to their child having a phone in school via SIMS Parent or by written/email notification to the school. The phone must be left in the school office at the start of the day and collected at the end of the day.

Phones should be clearly marked so that each pupil knows their own phone. Parents are advised that DMAT accepts no liability for the loss or damage to communication devices which are brought into school or school grounds.

Where a pupil is found by a member of staff to be using a mobile phone, the phone will be confiscated from the pupil, handed to a member of the office team who will record the name of the pupil and attach it to the phone for collection at the end of the day – parents will be informed.

## 4. Secondary Students

Students are allowed to carry their personal communication devices/devices in school and to use them responsibly in accordance with the following principles:

1. Communication devices and other digital equipment must not be used for any purpose (e.g. phoning, texting, surfing the internet, listening to music, taking photos, taking videos) inside the school building during registration and tutor period, in lessons or in between lessons including the use of ear/head phones unless specifically directed by a member of staff
2. Communication devices/devices must be switched off in all classes, corridors and other areas during teaching time. It is not acceptable for phones to be put on silent mode.
3. They can be used inside or outside the school building before the start of the school day, at social time and lunch time and after school
  - a. Parents/carers are reminded that, in cases of emergency, the school/college office remains the most appropriate point of contact and can ensure your child is reached quickly and assisted in any appropriate way.
  - b. Students should protect their phone numbers by only giving them to friends and keeping a note of who they have given them to. This can help to prevent the student's number from falling into the wrong hands and guard against the receipt of insulting, threatening or unpleasant voice, text and picture messages.
4. Sixth Formers are permitted to use their mobile phone discreetly during non-teaching time in the Sixth Form only spaces. They are still bound by the rules on unacceptable use outlined below.
5. Students are not permitted to charge phones or use mobile networks such as 4G/5G.
6. Loud speakers must not be used at any time on the school site.

## 5. Unacceptable Use

Any use of a mobile phone outside of the principles outlined above is unacceptable and may result in sanctions, including the immediate confiscation. The school/college will also consider any of the following to be unacceptable use of the mobile phone and a serious breach of the school's behaviour policy, resulting in sanctions being taken:

1. Photographing or filming staff or other students without their knowledge or permission.
2. Posting photographs or other material about a member of staff or another student online without their knowledge or permission.
3. Photographing or filming in toilets, changing rooms and other similar areas.
4. Bullying, harassing or intimidating staff or students by the use of text, email or multimedia messaging, sending inappropriate messages or posts to social networking or blogging sites.
5. Any student who uses vulgar, derogatory, or obscene language while using a mobile phone will face disciplinary action.
6. Refusing to switch a phone off or hand over a phone at the request of a member of staff.
7. Using the mobile phone outside school hours to intimidate or upset staff or students will be considered a breach of these guidelines in the same way as unacceptable use which takes place in school time. It should be noted that it is a criminal offence to use a mobile phone to menace or offend another person. As such, in cases of serious misconduct, the school may consider it appropriate to involve the police.
8. The Bluetooth function of a mobile phone must be switched off at all times and not be used to send images or files to other communication devices.

9. Any student caught using a mobile phone to cheat in exams or assessment will face disciplinary action.
10. For public examinations, communication devices are not allowed in the exam room. Students are advised to familiarise themselves with the rules of the exam board.
11. For all other examinations, communication devices should be turned off if they are to be carried.

## **6. Staff**

Staff use of communication devices during their working day should be discreet and appropriate e.g. not in the presence of pupils, unless for learning related activities. Communication devices should be switched off and kept in a safe place during lesson times.

The Trust does not take responsibility for items that are lost or stolen.

Staff must never contact pupils or parents from their personal mobile phone or give their mobile phone number to pupils or parents.

Staff must never send to, or accept from, colleagues or pupils, texts or images that could be viewed as inappropriate. If a member of staff needs to make telephone contact with a pupil, they should use a school telephone.

With regard to camera phones, a member of staff should never use their phone to photograph a pupil(s) or consent to being photographed by pupils.

Searches of mobile phones or personal devices may be carried out, in accordance with the DfE "Searching, screening and confiscation at school" guidance document online. This gives Head teachers and staff authorised by them a statutory power to search pupils or their possessions, without consent, where they have reasonable grounds for suspecting that the pupil may have pornographic images or images likely to cause personal injury to any person (including the pupil), or any other content prohibited in this policy. School staff are expected to read and follow the guidance above, in particular Section 15 relating to Statutory guidance for dealing with electronic devices.

If there is suspicion that material on a student's personal device or mobile phone may be illegal or may provide evidence relating to a criminal offence, the device will be handed over to the police for further investigation.

Breaches of this policy will be dealt with in line with the Trust's Staff Code of Conduct Policy.

## **7. Parents, Visitors or Volunteers in School**

Adults, visitors or volunteers in school must only use their mobile phone within the school office or staff room. Clear guidance regarding the use of mobiles and other devices must be clearly displayed in all reception areas.

Parents, visitors or adults either in school or accompanying children on school trips should not use their personal cameras or mobile phone cameras to take pictures of pupils unless it is at a public event such as Sports day or Summer fair and of their own children. Where images are taken for personal use by parents and carers, we request, on trust, that all photographs and videos are for personal use and should not be published in local media, social media, or online. Photos and videos taken purely for personal use are exempt from the GDPR.