



27th February 2024

Dear Parents/Carers,

Re: Consultation on a change to the Mobile Phone Policy

I am sure that you are aware of the recent government guidance issued to schools about the use of mobile phones by students.

For several years at Maria Fidelis, we have had the policy that, although we know students have phones on them, they have not been allowed to have them switched on or use them on site. However, phones are becoming an increasingly serious problem for the school, with students using their phones on the school premises, including in lessons; children calling their parents when they are not happy with a situation has never improved that situation. There have even been incidents where children have been told by their parents to record what teachers say and do.

This is unacceptable. It is a complete breach of the school rules and has a very damaging effect on the trust between staff and families. I am not prepared to have staff worried that they may be secretly recorded and then footage of them manipulated in order to be shared online or made public.

I am therefore consulting with all stakeholders about introducing a complete ban of all mobile devices (phones, smart watches, tablets, any device able to receive or send messages via Bluetooth or the internet) for students in Years 7-11 to start from September 2024. Students will hand in any device at the beginning of the school day and devices will be stored in a locked cupboard in a locked room for the duration of the school day. All devices will be returned at the end of the school day.

Any students not complying with the rules by refusing to hand in a phone or secreting a second phone about their person will face normal sanctions for not following school rules. The consultation will run until Friday 15th March.

I feel that we have been heading towards this for some time and this consultation is not a reaction to the government guidance; I had discussed this with staff and governors before the announcement was made.

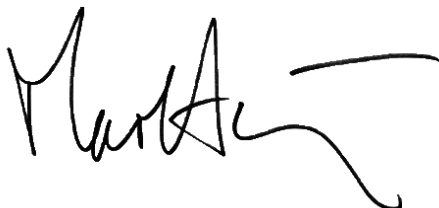
Social media and its influence have a toxic impact on children's lives and it would be remiss of me not to take the strongest action I can to tackle the issue in school. I urge you to do the same outside of school.

The vast majority of pastoral issues we are having to deal with in school stem from children misusing their phones outside of school. Too often, we deal with the consequences of children sending hurtful or inappropriate message and/or images to each other, or inciting anti-social or aggressive behaviour. We witness increasingly rude and oppositional behaviour in school, which is often encouraged on social media.

We shall continue to educate the students about keeping themselves safe online and adapt to the ever-changing online world, and we draw on a range of resources to help us deliver this as effectively as we can. However, there is only so much we can do as a school; but if we work together – parents and school – we can have a far greater impact on trying to give children the time and space to enjoy their childhood.

I am more than happy to discuss this consultation with any parent, and I will be holding a parents' drop-in clinic on Wednesday 6th March at 3:45 - 5:00pm in the Newman Library. If you would like to respond to the consultation, please do so via the School email by Friday 15th March: office@mariafidelis.camden.sch.uk.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Anthony', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Mr M. Anthony
Headmaster