



Dear Parent(s)/Carer(s),

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to update you regarding mobile phones and electronic devices at The Valley Leadership Academy. At The Valley, we want to support our pupils to achieve their fullest potential career and develop good character, and we know that great learning underpins this.

We have noticed that for some students, mobile phones can be a distraction to learning and can have a negative impact on their mental health and well-being. Due to this, we feel strongly as a school community that the use of electronic devices and mobile phones should be restricted during the school day. Research shows that schools that have banned the use of mobile phones are seeing a significant rise in student outcomes, improved mental health and social interaction skills. This for us, gives a strong rationale for ensuring that mobile phones are neither seen nor heard during the school day. Whilst we already have in place a policy that restricts the use of mobile phones by pupils on the school site, from Monday 15<sup>th</sup> April, we will be enhancing the policy and ensuring that it is adhered to rigorously.

#### What have we done so far?

- We have spent the last few weeks speaking with students about the use of mobile phones, which has included dedicated lessons and a series of assemblies.
- We have also met with a number of parents to discuss the ban and the positive impact it will have on their children's education and wellbeing.
- We have arranged for external agencies to deliver sessions on the impact of mobile phones on young people's mental health.

#### What can you do to support the school?

- Consider carefully whether your child needs to carry their phone to school, and if it can be left at home during the day.
- If you feel that your child must take a phone to school, for instance if they walk or travel alone, please ensure that they have a school bag in which it can be stored safely and securely out of sight for the duration of the school day.
- Please do not contact your child on their mobile phone during the school day. Any important messages can be passed on to them via the school reception desk, who can be contacted on 01706 873896 or by email [info@thevalley.staracademies.org](mailto:info@thevalley.staracademies.org)
- Please do speak to your child about the potential issues that can be caused by excessive attachment to mobile devices. These can include detrimental effects on mental health and well-being, self-esteem, sleep deprivation and anxiety. More information can be found about these issues here: [Click here for more information](#)
- Consider setting limits on the use of mobile phones and electronic devices in the home, especially around bedtimes. A growing number of young people nationally report that sleep deprivation can impact upon their behaviour and performance in school.



## FAQs

**Can my child bring their mobile phone/electronic device to school?** Yes. Mobile phones and personal electronic devices must be switched off when students enter the school site and must remain switched off and out of sight throughout the school day. They should not be on the child's 'person' (e.g. in a pocket) and must be stored securely in a school bag. If your child brings a mobile phone or electronic device into school, they do so at their own risk. The school will not accept liability for lost, damaged or stolen devices.

**What do you mean by 'electronic device'?** If brought into school, the following personal electronic devices must remain switched off and out of sight throughout the school day: smart watches (that can send/receive messages/notifications, and/or record sound/video), headphones (including wireless devices such as AirPods), tablets/iPads, music players, digital camera/video recorder, handheld games (e.g. Nintendo Switch).

**What will happen if my child is using their phone/device on the school premises or during the school day?**

If a student uses a phone/device on the school site or during the day, they will be asked to hand their device(s) in. Devices will be stored in a secure place and will be clearly labelled ready for collection at the end of the same day. To discourage use of electronic devices, we will operate an escalated approach:

1. First offence – Device handed-in, student can collect at the end of the same day. Parent/Carer informed.
2. Second offence – Device handed-in, parent/carer must collect it from the school.
3. Third offence – Device handed-in, parent/carer must collect it from the school. Parent/carer to attend a meeting.

**What if I can't collect my child's phone/electronic device on the same day?** That's OK. We will keep the device secure at the school until it is convenient for you to collect it.

**What will happen if my child refuses to hand in their electronic device/mobile phone?** This is something we all want to avoid. To try to prevent this from happening, we will have a graduated approach:

*The pupil will be asked to attend the academy's 'reflection room' to consider their decision. Once they make the mature and correct decision to hand over their phone to be stored securely, they will be returned to their lesson.*

*If this decision is not made within a reasonable and appropriate amount of time (15 minutes), we will then phone a parent/carer and ask them to speak with their son/daughter to secure their compliance. If the phone still isn't handed in, the student will remain in the 'reflection room', including during social times, until we can arrange a parent meeting to resolve the issue.*

Please encourage your child to not use their device in school to avoid the above escalation. Whilst in school each pupil needs to be focussed on learning and avoiding the distractions that mobile devices can cause.

**What happens if I need to speak to my child during the school day?** We understand that there may be rare occasions when you need to speak with your child for emergency reasons. If this is the case, please contact the school via the main number (01706 873 896) and we will pass a message to your child. If we feel that your child needs to speak with you, we will provide a private space for them to use a school phone to contact you. In exceptional circumstances, for instance if a child is anxious about a sick relative, they can arrange to make a call from a private space in school at break or lunchtime through their Head of Year.

**Can devices be used during breaks/lunches?** No. It is important for young people's personal development that they communicate with their friends, develop their social skills and be present with each other. Phones must remain switched off and out of sight during breaks/lunches.

**I really find it hard to separate my child from their phone, can you help?** Yes, absolutely. We want our students to use their electronic devices responsibly and in moderation, without having a negative impact on

their learning, safety or mental health. We can work with you to put in place plans to avoid overuse and misuse and will support you in ensuring your child is meeting the school's expectations.

When we return from Easter, we have made a number of changes, to classes in year 7 & 8. We have informed all students of this in assembly and will allocate these changes on the first day back. The decision to regroup students have been made to ensure that all students progress in a safe calm learning environment.

We will also be educating students on how to use devices responsibly and sharing further information on how parents/carers can monitor their child's use. We wish to thank you for your support, and we know that we can rely on your assistance in this important endeavour, starting immediately after the Easter holidays. I would ask that you discuss the policy with your child over the Easter break to prepare them and to ensure a smooth start back to school.

Thank you for your support in this matter.

Your faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shane Carey', with a horizontal line underneath.

**Shane Carey**  
**Principal**