



THE BUCKINGHAM SCHOOL

A SPECIALIST SPORTS COLLEGE

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Headteacher: Mr A McGinnes

24 October 2019

Dear Parent / Carer

I am writing to you today to make you aware of some concerns which have come to my attention over the course of this half term and the actions we are taking as a result.

Social Media Awareness

Social Media is currently causing problems amongst different groups of students in schools within our community. Some of those issues are presenting themselves directly at this school. However, there are other consequences of Social Media which are having an impact, such as parental concerns and complaints which follow problems in and out of school, consuming our time whilst we deal with them. Even the sheer numbers of calls students are making to each other is concerning our families because they interrupt homework time or family life.

A greater concern for us is the naivety (let's call it that) of some of our students. We have had a spate of events at school being filmed and we have been forced to apply the very serious sanctions outlined in our policies. I cannot stress highly enough - photographing and filming within school is strictly forbidden and will typically result in exclusion. Posting films on social media is an even more serious matter and will result in lengthier exclusions. Please emphasise this to your child.

Another concern relates to chat groups; these feature many members of our community, including students from other schools. We believe that most of the content and comments exchanged is harmless, however, much of the bullying we encounter takes place online. Please bear in mind, for example, WhatsApp set their minimum age at 16 (they put it up from 13) therefore, most of our students should not be on these groups anyway. Many parents cover their concerns by insisting that they have access to their children's devices and accounts. We strongly urge you to do this, as a minimum, and conduct random checks to reassure yourself of their online safety. However, please also be aware that your child may have created multiple accounts and profiles.

Please refer to the e-safety section of our school website, under the safeguarding heading.

The Buckingham School is concerned that every student should have the opportunity to attend school activities/obtain equipment, regardless of their financial circumstances. As such, it may be possible to subsidise those students who would otherwise be unable to attend trips/purchase items. Please feel free to write in confidence Mrs K Bones at kbones@buckinghamschool.org, if you wish to seek assistance, or obtain more information about Pupil Premium funding.



Mobile Phone Policy

We already have a very strong Mobile Phone Policy at school but, in response to recent incidents, we have decided to strengthen it even further. There are two changes; both of which will come into force from Monday 4 November and will affect all students in years 7-11:

1. When a student is seen with their hand in their pocket, they may be asked to show the contents of their pocket. If there is a phone in their pocket and it is switched on, it will be confiscated. This is because some students walk around with hands on their devices, so they can feel vibrations when silent alerts take place. We do not accept checking the time as a reason, as mobile phones are required to be switched off.
2. If a phone is confiscated, it will need to be collected by parents or carers on every occasion. Please be aware that as our Administration Team finishes at 4pm, devices will need to be collected before that time. We will allow students to collect their phones if we still have them after five school days and we will also allow them to be collected at the end of a term. We will not be able to allow "special cases" to the confiscation rule, so we trust that you will emphasise with your child that problems caused by confiscation will be their own responsibility.

If a student needs to call home, they are able to do so during break and lunch times from the Student Office. We would also always pass incoming messages onto students. Furthermore, as an example, the bus passes that some students hold on their mobile phones (such as X60) can be printed, therefore, our students simply do not need a phone in school.

Hoodies

Hoodies and other similar garments, are taking up too much of our time at the moment. They do not form part of the school uniform, however, as the mornings are getting colder, they are being worn to school more frequently. That in itself is not an issue as students are asked to remove them as they enter the premises of a morning.

However, hoodies are not allowed to be worn throughout the school day. We are finding a significant minority of students are putting them back on during the day and we are then repeatedly asking for them to be removed. Therefore, from Monday 4 November, we will be confiscating hoodies from students and, as with mobile phones, will be asking parents to collect them, rather than simply handing them back at the end of the day.

Blazers

Other than when given specific permission to remove their blazer, or during the 13.20-14.00 lunch break, blazers are required to be worn at all times. Coats may be worn over blazers when outside, but not instead of them at any time.

Our main concern is the safety and well-being of the students, along with a well-ordered school day. We appreciate and thank you for your continued support in the strong stances the school takes, on its journey of constant improvement.

Yours faithfully



Mr M Wardle
Deputy Headteacher

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