



20 December 2018

Dear Parents and Guardians

Change to mobile devices policy

As you know we have recently been consulting on a proposed change to our mobile devices policy. These changes will come into effect from 7 January 2019. I would like to thank the 47 parents who contributed to the consultation process alongside the 8 members of staff, 14 Governors and 4 students and 4 registration groups. Having read and discussed all the points made, I have outlined below the policy we will be moving to from 7 January 2019.

Mobile devices policy from 7 January 2019

Key Stage 3 & 4

- Phones and other devices including fitness trackers, smart watches and headphones are not to be seen, heard or used on site until after 3.30pm or when you leave the building at the end of school to go home.
- If headphones are seen then the device they are connected to will also be confiscated.
- The site refers to all buildings, grounds, pathways, car parks and playground areas that form Longdean School.

Post 16

- Post 16 students can use their devices in the study areas, library and canteen in lesson time. They can use them in lessons under the supervision of a teacher.
- In break and lunch times Post 16 use of devices is limited to their study areas only.

Staff

- The ban does not extend to staff but our policy reminds them of their obligations around mobile devices.

Devices on trips

- Use of devices on trips to be determined by the trip organiser

If a device is confiscated the following tariff of arrangements for the return of the item will be established:

- First confiscation – returned to student at the end of the day
- Second confiscation – returned to student after 5 school days
- Third confiscation – returned to student after 10 school days
- Fourth confiscation – returned to parent or legal guardian (not a sibling or other relative) at the end of half term. The phone will be returned in this meeting and there will be a discussion about the sanction for further incidents of misuse.

Any confiscated items will be placed in sealed, labelled envelopes in the school office until they are collected. If headphones are confiscated the device they are connected to will also be removed from the student.

As a response to some of the points made in the consultation we have:

- Amended the tariff of confiscations with half a term the longest followed by a meeting with parents to discuss next steps.
- Invested in 100 more phone lines to the school and updated our phone system to direct your calls to the appropriate staff members more swiftly.

Registered office:
Rumballs Road, Hemel Hempstead, Herts HP3 8JB
Registered in England and Wales: 07695624
Tel: 01442 217277
www.longdean.herts.sch.uk
<https://moodle.longdean.herts.sch.uk>
admin@longdean.herts.sch.uk

First Day Response:
Da Vinci: 01442 205706
Franklin: 01442 205707
Gates: 01442 205760
Pascal: 01442 205703
Sixth Form: 01442 205720

- We have also set aside £23,000 to upgrade the two oldest ICT suites in the school.
- We have included in the policy the opportunity for parents to make requests for special consideration for their child not to adhere to the policy. Such requests will be looked at on a case by case basis and would normally but not exclusively relate to issues around disability, SEND or medical issues where the need to use mobile devices is specifically cited as necessary. Any request must be made in writing to the Headteacher. An email request or phone request will not be considered.
- Explored the legality of our proposed new policy. I am comfortable that our legal obligation to inform you of our policy and to ensure that it is proportionate in all cases is met. This is why we have removed the final element of the confiscation tariff (confiscation for a term) and why we are still allowing students to have devices on them in school. It is also why I am allowing parents to make requests for special consideration.
- Acquired new headphones so if these are needed in lessons the school will issue them to students.
- Placed signs on the door reminding students to turn devices off and place them in bags until 3.30pm.

These changes will be implemented during the next term.

To ensure that students are fully aware of these changes we have held assemblies this week with all students and will repeat them on the first day back. The ban on devices will not come into effect until break time on 7 January so that all students have these reminders and so that staff have also been reminded of the change and their role in it. We will also amend our E-safety, Positive Behaviour and Exclusions policies as well as our Home School Agreement. These will then be placed on our website. Members of the Senior Team will also be present on the doors on 7 & 8 January to remind students to turn devices off and put them away.

I outlined in my previous letter the rationale for this change but in short I am concerned about the time that staff are giving up to resolve incidents triggered on social media, often outside of school. I am also concerned about the impact that over reliance on these devices is having on student self-esteem and mental health as well as issues of e-safety in and outside of school. I am also comfortable that these changes will continue to protect your child's health and safety at school and will not be to the detriment of their learning. I have addressed these points in the frequently asked questions. I have attached these to this letter and I encourage you to read them again. I have also placed a summary of the legal position around confiscation on our website along with the new policies mentioned in the letter.

I am sure that you will discuss these new arrangements with your children over the holiday and I look forward to working with you and your child in the New Year.

Yours sincerely



Mr G Cunningham
Headteacher

Frequently Asked Questions

Can my child still bring their phone to school?

Of course! Many of us are parents and we appreciate why you would want your child to have a phone on the way to or from school. They just need to be kept out of sight and switched off – for example in bags or lockers – and not used on site until 3:30pm.

What if I need to contact my child at school?

In an emergency simply phone the school office on 01442 217277 and the message will be passed to them. In fact, this is actually quicker than trying to contact them directly.

What if my child is ill during the school day?

They ask the teacher if they can leave the lesson, they go to First Aid, First Aid will make contact with parent if deemed necessary.

What if my child feels that they urgently need to contact me? They might need me to drop something in that they have forgotten.

Realistically, these occasions occur very rarely, if at all. Our staff are trained and equipped to handle the vast majority of issues that can arise on any school day. However, if they desperately need to contact you before 3:30pm, they approach their Pastoral Manager or Student Services.

I am concerned about my child's phone being confiscated. How can I help them to avoid this?

The easiest way to avoid any problems is to encourage your child to get into a strict routine of turning their phone off as they approach the school. It should then be placed out of sight.

My child has left their phone on and needs to turn it off. What should they do?

Any member of staff can be approached about this. The student should be prompt and honest and ask the member of staff if they can turn their phone off. Speaking to a member of staff first will avoid any potential conflicts.

You are supposed to be preparing children for the world of work. Doesn't possession of a phone prepare them for the real world?

As a society, we are only now becoming aware of the full scope of what young people have been accessing online over the last few years. There is no wider place in the working world for toxic comments, threats, access to explicit material and inappropriate filming. We have been moved to a position where we feel that our students have to be protected from these issues, as have many other secondary schools across the UK. Our existing ICT resources give us all of the real-world applications that we need. We also note that many workplaces are introducing phone restrictions of their own, so in this respect, we are preparing our young people in a realistic way.

Won't this be detrimental to their education in certain lessons?

No. Longdean has far more ICT capacity than most mainstream secondary schools. When we moved into the new building, we invested in several banks of laptops, which can be booked by any teacher and used in lessons as and when mobile technology would be of benefit.

As the restriction ends at 3:30pm, can phones be used on site after that time?

Yes, although we will take the necessary steps if we feel that they are being used to promote negative interaction between students.

What if my child needs to tell the time?

There are clocks in every room. If a child has difficulty reading a clock face, they could always ask either other children or staff. Cheap digital watches are also readily available.

Does this restriction also apply to smart watches?

Yes.

How will I find out if my child is in detention?

If this is the case, you will always be contacted via the details that you have given us. If in any doubt, do call the school and we will verify for you.

What if school needs my child to do something after school?

We will always contact you if this is the case.

Doesn't this inhibit access to 'Show My Homework'?

There should never be any need to access this app - or any others that we use - during the school day. Access should be part of a routine at home. We would strongly recommend that students check 'Show My Homework' before leaving for school in the morning and when they first come home after school.

What about access to my child's timetable?

This should be checked at home, when the student is preparing for the school day ahead. Students should have stuck their timetable into a diary or folder, or at least made a note of it in a safe place. If this is a change for your child, we would recommend that you have one timetable on display at home, one kept in a safe place at home and one in the student's bag. They can then make a note of what they need for the day ahead.