

MACCLESFIELD HIGH SCHOOL POLICY STATEMENT

A4.7: STUDENTS: MOBILE PHONES AND A/V EQUIPMENT

RATIONALE

Macclesfield High School (MHS) Governing Body recognises that mobile phones and portable music listening devices such as MP3 players and iPods are very useful. The Governors wish to allow legitimate use of these items to students.

PURPOSES

- to clarify the position to staff, students and parents/carers
- to ensure that all students are kept safe

GUIDELINES

1. The policy at MHS on mobile phones and any portable A/V equipment is that we prefer students not to bring them to school at all, but we understand why they and their parents want them to do so, for reasons of safety and security.
2. The School is concerned about the cost of some of these items and must make clear that the School cannot accept any responsibility for these items. The student must remain responsible for the item at all times, unless it is in the possession of a member of staff, either for safe keeping or after confiscation.
3. If students do bring phones to school, for reasons of safety and security on the journey to and from school, the phone must be switched off and out of sight, during lesson time. The same must apply to all A/V equipment including head phones. **All equipment must be switched off and out of sight.** "Switched off" means what it says; it does not allow for "silent mode". "Lesson time" includes tutor time, assemblies, lesson changeovers and detentions.
4. Telephones must NEVER be used in school to take photographs or videos. Taking photographs or videos without the permission of the subject is an invasion of personal privacy and cannot be tolerated.
5. Sometimes a teacher may decide that use of music within a lesson is valid (to set a mood, for inspiration etc.) but this should be a corporate activity and the music listened to by the whole class (i.e. through speakers). The use of headphones to listen to music in a solitary fashion during a lesson is not normally allowed.
6. Students are allowed to use phones and A/V equipment, **for legitimate purposes**, before school, at break and lunch time, and after school, provided they do not annoy anyone by their use. For even more clarity, the times for them to be **out of sight and switched off** would be from 8.40 to the start of break (11.00am), then from the end of break (11.20) to the start of lunch (12.20), then from the end of lunch (1.00pm) to 3.00pm.
7. We are concerned about the development of text bullying, so-called "cyber-bullying", using mobiles. Sanctions are described in Appendix 1.
8. If a student breaks the rule about a phone or personal A/V set, there will be two levels of sanction, described in Appendix 1.
9. New possibilities for the use of a mobile phone, eg, for bluetoothing podcasts of the lesson or key revision points will be kept under review.
10. Parents are asked not to communicate with their child via the child's mobile phone. Messages should all go to the School Office.

CONCLUSION

The Governing Body does not wish to see a total ban. Students are asked to cooperate with this regime, so as to avoid the need for a total ban. Parents are asked to stress this to their children. This policy needs to be read in conjunction with the policy on Behaviour and Relationships. As technology advances very rapidly these days, this policy needs to be reviewed annually.

This policy was agreed by the Governing Body on 15 June 2009. Governors asked for it to be issued to parents annually.

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APPENDIX 1

If anyone uses their phone to convey inappropriate text messages or images as a form of bullying and harassment, they will be banned from bringing a mobile phone to school for a period and will, of course, be subject to other sanctions. Similarly, if someone uses their mobile phone to record and transmit images of bullying, assault or other violence – the craze referred to by the media as “happy slapping” – they will be banned from bringing a mobile phone to school for a period and will, of course, be subject to other sanctions

If a student breaks the rule about a phone or personal A/V set, there will be two levels of sanction: one for the individual student and the other for the whole school community – that is, Governors may decide to ban them totally.

- If a phone or personal A/V set is switched on or visible during one of the times when it should not be, the member of staff will make a note of the incident (time, place, student) and issue a “final warning”. If it happens again, the member of staff will confiscate it. It will be handed back at the end of the day or the next day. The report of the incident will be held centrally.
- If the student refuses to hand it over, this refusal will also be noted and the student will be referred to a line manager and may be banned from bringing it to school for a period.
- If a confiscation happens twice in one term to the same student, the piece of equipment will be confiscated and kept until the end of the week or until the parent comes to collect it **and** the student may be banned from bringing it to school for a period.
- Parents will be asked to collect the item on this and any subsequent occasions.

“Learning Behaviour”: the Report of the Steer Group

On 21 October 2005, the Steer Group (of practising teachers and headteachers who produced the report “Learning Behaviour” for the Government) recommended that all schools reconsider their policy on mobile phones. Here is an extract from their report, “Learning Behaviour”:

“Mobile Phones

228. Mobile phones are now part of daily life, and have changed the way in which individuals and organisations communicate. We understand that around 90% of secondary school pupils own a mobile phone, and that the average age at which children receive their first mobile phone is eight years. As communications technology continues to develop, schools need to be aware of the changes and their implications for behaviour.

“Recommendation 3.10.4: schools should be required to have a clear policy on the possession and use of mobile phones on the school site, including details of the sanctions, if pupils disobey the policy.”

As well as taking the Steer Group recommendation into account, this latest decision of the Governing Body is based on the two main principles behind our school’s approach to rule-giving. These are (1) to promote peace and order in a community, and (2) to encourage the development of self-discipline in the community’s members, especially when some of those members are children and young people.

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229. We are deeply concerned at some of the negative impacts which mobile phones, including camera phones, are having on school discipline and pupil safety. This is not simply a case of ring tones disrupting lessons. Mobile phones are sometimes used to convey inappropriate text messages as a form of bullying and harassment. Some pupils have used mobile phones to invite aggressive parents to school, so the parent can challenge teachers’ right to punish misbehaviour. Pupils with mobile phones may also find themselves bullied or have their phones stolen, with a particular risk in some communities of mugging on the way to school. A particularly extreme and dangerous practice is where mobile phones are used to record and transmit images of bullying, assault or other violence – the craze referred to by the media as “happy slapping”.

230. We believe pupils should be discouraged from bringing mobile phones to school. It is obviously unacceptable for pupils to have phones switched on in lessons. We support head teachers who, having considered the community in which their school is situated and consulted with parents, decide to ban mobile phones.

231. We do, however, recognise that for some schools, a total ban on mobile phones on the school site would be inappropriate; mobiles are helpful when pupils need to contact parents to arrange lifts home after school. There are also individual pupils who, due to particular family or personal circumstances, find a mobile phone an important support on their way to and from school. These are however a minority of pupils: in most cases, our view remains that the disadvantages of bringing mobile phones to school outweigh the benefits.

232. We note advances in other technologies means it is possible to give parents and schools control of pupils’ mobiles. This means it is possible to disable certain phone functions, whilst allowing some numbers to remain active for emergencies. We understand the technology has the ability to operate on a geographical basis, such as within school boundaries. We will be interested to see whether schools make use of this technology in the future. However, we do not see this as a substitute for schools having a clear policy on the possession and use of mobile phones on the school site, and there being appropriate measures to punish those pupils who do not obey the school rules.

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