

31 March 2025

Dear Parents/Carers,

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to let you know about a policy change relating to smartphones in school from September 2025.

As you may be aware, support is growing amongst parents/carers to limit the use of smartphones for young people. To this effect we have been working with a campaign called Smartphone Free Childhood to consider how we can support this at Downlands. <https://smartphonefreechildhood.co.uk>

As you know, we already have a policy in place that prohibits students from accessing their phones during school hours. To further support parent/carers and help the wellbeing of our students, we have decided to implement a smartphone-free policy starting from September. This means that students will have no need of a smartphone at all during the school day.

Why are we making this change?

Supporting parent/carers: We understand that setting boundaries around smartphone use is a particularly challenging aspect of parenting today. A 'smartphone free' approach at school will make it easier for parents to explain to their children that they do not need a smartphone.

Supporting Student Wellbeing: Reducing access to smartphones, including social media, can have positive effects on students' mental health, reducing anxiety and promoting a healthier lifestyle. Less distractions during the school day will also help to improve their ability to concentrate and learn. What does this mean for students?

Students will still be allowed to bring phones to school, if they wish, for safety reasons linked to travelling to and from school. The existing rule that students are not allowed to access their phones at school will still be in place. Phones should still remain switched off and should be kept in bags at all times during the school day.

Phones will not be allowed to be used in class for any reason and students will not be able to access their phone during the school day to, for example, find out information from Bromcom. We will provide access to Bromcom at Reception at break and lunch, we will still give students paper timetables in September and also advice on how to keep a timetable handy i.e. laminate a copy to keep attached to a pencil case etc.



In case of emergencies, pupils will still be able to go to Reception and we will ensure that any important messages are promptly relayed home. We will not be able to send messages home about for example, lack of equipment or to top up Scopay accounts.

In the meantime, if students are asked to use phones during lessons, staff have been asked to book ICT for students without smartphones. Please note that smartphone-free does not apply to students who require a smartphone for medical purposes and as an inclusive school we commit to continue making reasonable adaptations to support meeting the needs of pupils facing additional challenges such as those with SEND.

We are aware about carer/parental concerns around mobile phones and trips and have begun a discussion with colleagues about this issue.

Thank you for your support.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M Wignall", is placed over a light grey rectangular background.

Mr M Wignall
Headteacher