

15th July 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 at their own risk, 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 or lockers at all times during the school day. Students who do not follow this rule will be sanctioned in accordance with the school's behaviour policy.

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 in the canteen 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 or glueing it into a book they bring to school every day. We will also provide access to paper-based timetables during tutor time. However, it remains our students' responsibility to be prepared for the school day and to check their lessons during tutor time if they are unsure.

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.

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,



Mr J. Chandler – Assistant Headteacher - Behaviour