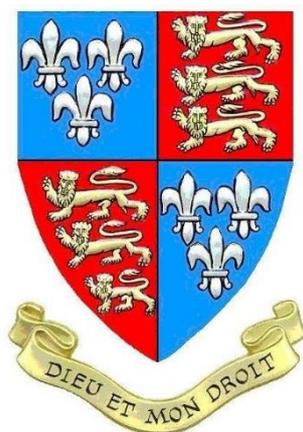


King Edward VI Grammar School



Digital Communications and Mobile Devices Policy

v1

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Encouraging Excellence Nurturing Talent

King Edward VI Grammar School

Digital Communications and Mobile Devices Policy

*“We expect all students, as intelligent and able individuals, to be reflective learners able to **moderate their own behaviour** thus ensuring that all members of our community can contribute to and benefit from the wide range of opportunities that exist here”*

This principle is at the heart of King Edward’s expectations for all of its students be that in their school life or in their online life. Used correctly social media and mobile devices have many positive advantages and the school welcomes the innovation, the benefit to learning and education that they can bring to school life.

The school is therefore prepared to tolerate and encourage the appropriate use of mobile devices, and social media where it has a direct and positive impact upon learning or the facilitation of learning. It is therefore down to the professional judgment of the classroom teacher how best to utilise or deploy the use of social media, and mobile devices to support learning in their classroom. Staff use of social media is governed under the Staff Code of Conduct and the terms of the IT Acceptable Use guidance, and this policy aims to govern student use. Additional information and education about the legal framework and acceptable use of mobile devices and social media is also delivered via the PSHE and assemblies programme.

Acceptable use of social media and mobile devices in school

1. Mobile devices may be used in lessons, registration or assemblies under the direction of the teacher to support learning or education.
2. Mobiles used in lessons without the teacher’s permission, or where any mobile device is found being used to support anti-social behaviour during the school day - either in or out of lessons - will be confiscated by the school and kept at reception for collection at the end of the school day.
3. Mobile devices may be used by students outside of lessons, registration or assembly times for the student’s own private use which the school respects.
4. Students are expressly forbidden to video and/or publish any image of students or staff without the consent of the individuals concerned as this represents a legal breach of privacy, copyright, and may also raise child protection or safeguarding concerns.
5. Private use of the mobile devices by students is governed by the normal laws and policies relating to unacceptable conduct e.g. bullying, defamatory, discriminatory, offensive, harassing content or a breach of data protection, confidentiality, copyright, prevent, safeguarding or child protection concerns. Any breaches related to the above will be considered extremely seriously by the school and must be reported as soon as possible to the Head of Year or Director of Middle School, who will consider the evidence and escalate matters where appropriate including the reporting of any communications that cause legal concern to the relevant authorities - Police; Safeguarding team; Prevent team.

*It is the duty of all members of the school community, students, staff **and** parents to immediately report unacceptable use to the relevant Head of Year or Director of School: this report must include evidence of the unacceptable use.*

Appendix A

The policing of digital communications: understanding the role of the parent and the school.

Digital communications present many positives for all of us in society and the school accepts, respects, and supports the benefits that digital communications present to all members of society and the school community.

However, the reality of the abuse and misuse of digital communications by students presents significant challenges to parents, students and schools. The following guidelines provide a framework for understanding the relationship between the school and parents in working together to tackle issues of online immaturity; anti-social behaviour; and cyber bullying.

Understanding and categorising digital communications

Are young people really any different today from young people in the past? Adults are often shocked and surprised by the language, tone and content of young people's digital communications but are these really so very different from the "private (?)" conversations had by young people in the pre-digital age? Today the issue is less about the conversation and more about its impact and spread and it is this that has, and is rightly forcing a change on the nature of online communications for all of us. However there is a discernible pattern to online communications amongst young people:

1. Online immaturity

Online immaturity is categorised by petty bickering, arguments and rows often around the making and breaking of friendships. In addition there is also the element of sexting and other forms of sexual exploration that categorise these types of digital communications. Such communications are driven by children whose actual intelligence is often higher than their emotional intelligence: *they lack maturity and cannot, and do not understand the impact of their words, images, or the impact, spread and permanence that such communications have.*

For these pupils engaged in online immaturity this often represents a very normal stage of their emotional development but unfortunately for them this is now played out live online and to multiple audiences: *audiences they are often unaware of as they naively perceive that everything is private.*

2. Anti-social behaviour

For a tiny minority of young people the nastier side of online communication can rear its head as they emerge from the online immaturity that tends to occur in the lower school. In this phase young people's communications can take on a darker side, encouraging anti-social behaviour amongst others, or celebrating anti-social behaviour, intolerance, prejudice, racism, sexism or other forms of communications that are deemed socially unacceptable by society: this may include negative forms of imagery or video footage.

A lack of educational development, boundary issues or other social or emotional factors may well be at the heart of many of these communications. They often represent a moment of madness, or have other precipitating factors linked to them. Many are one offs or represent an emotional response in the moment driven by anger, envy or jealousy: none are excusable and the reasons need exploring. This type of communication is often a warning sign or precursor to cyber bullying.

3. Cyber Bullying

Cyber bullying is a very distinct entity, and exists entirely separately of either online immaturity, or anti-social behaviour; although it has its roots in both forms of communication. Cyber bullying is characterised by a planned, and persistent campaign over many weeks and months that seeks to socially isolate, ridicule or otherwise psychologically harm another individual or individuals.

Working Together

In each area the school seeks to work together to support parenting and help bring about educational and developmental change of the young people in its care, in the following ways:

1. In cases of online immaturity and anti-social communications we will help support parenting by facilitating, moderating and acting as a mediator between the different parties to help educate all parties about friendships, relationships, appropriate behaviour, appropriate methods of conflict resolution, the uses and abuses of social media/digital communications, the law, and the policies governing digital communications.
2. Parents will support the school by providing evidence, screenshots, images or videos of the communications to help support the school in its role as mediator. Parents remain ultimately responsible for the parenting of their children, their development, and the application of any appropriate sanctions e.g. blocking of accounts; monitoring the use of communications; removal of devices or other privileges.
3. In the cases of more serious pattern forming behaviour linked to anti-social communications the school will act as arbiter in determining if such communications need to be forwarded to other authorities: again the emphasis is on parents providing the evidence from their son/daughter's account to enable the school to investigate and act accordingly.
4. In cases of cyberbullying the parent's role is pivotal in providing the robust pattern of evidence required for the school to successfully challenge this type of unacceptable behaviour. Parents are required to work closely with the school to record dates, details of events and communications; to gain access to their son/daughter's accounts and to present screenshots, images and videos of the offensive behaviour. The school will then apply its anti-bullying policy to identify the appropriate sanctions and appropriate pastoral support to assist both individuals involved: the bully and the victim.

What can parents do to help prevent inappropriate digital communication?

1. Be in your son/daughter's digital life: nothing is private!
2. Educate them and make sure you have open and honest conversations about communication, the appropriateness of that communication and the types of language and behaviour that are unacceptable.
3. Apply the granny test: if your son/daughter would be embarrassed to show it to granny then don't post it.
4. Impose sanctions for significant breaches of trust - removal of devices; a period of monitoring of communications, or open access are all good options.
5. Educate, educate, educate.

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