

## Changes to the student mobile phone use from September 2023:

### FAQs:

#### What are the new restrictions?

Students must not use their phone (without permission from a member of staff) at **any point** during the school day once they cross the threshold into school and until they leave the school site.

If phones are brought on site, they must be switched off and kept in lockers during the day.

#### Are there any exceptions or exemptions?

- If a student needs to use their phone in school, then can go to Main Reception and request to sit and use it.
- **Late Room provision:** Students may also use it in the **Late Room provision** in order to contact a parent/guardian. They will not be allowed to sit and play on their phone or use it for any other reason than as a means to communicate with a parent / guardian.
- **Sixth Formers** will be given the privilege to use their phone in the Sixth Form Common Room.

#### What if I need to contact my child during the day?

Please phone Main Reception and they can pass any urgent messages on.

Students will have access to their Surface Pros and able to check their email over lunchtime in the designated spaces around school.

#### What about when they are on trips or fixtures?

The restrictions will still apply. They will not have free access to phones; however, staff may give permission for use to update on travel times or allow phone use at designated times on trips.

#### Will there be any sanctions if students break the restrictions?

Yes – students can expect to have their phone confiscated on the spot and will have to retrieve the phone at the end of the school day from their Head of Year. For those who accrue their third confiscation then the phone will be held at school until the time when a parent can come and collect the phone. Should this continue to be problematic after that point then the Head of Year will liaise with parents to establish a plan.

#### Why are we making this change?

There are a number of reasons for our decision to tighten up on phone use in school or on school-related activities:

- to promote more face-to-face social interaction and psycho-social development;
- send a strong message that we won't facilitate the use of mobile phones;
- that the level of dependency on phones for social engagement and entertainment reduces;
- that it gives our young people some ring-fenced time away from checking social media or gaming;
- and that our students' concentration levels and attention spans benefit

Additionally, September this year sees the completion of the roll out of devices, seeing all of our students in the Senior School being issued with a Surface Pro, thus removing the need for an alternative form of device for use in lessons.

We recognise the increased importance that social media and gaming has become to many of our young people as a result of the pandemic. For many, this was a significant way of fostering and maintaining social interaction and sense of belonging. Naturally, this has been carried forward into the post-pandemic world, but we are seeing the dependence on phones remaining high and often at the expense of their social skills and development. We have students who struggle being amongst large groups, or being in the more vibrant parts of school, such as the dining hall, or who struggle with anxiety when having to have face to face conversations, mostly because they have not had the "usual" number of social interactions that would usually have accrued by their age, from which they would have learned to cope, adjust and manage.

The sight of almost so many of our Y7s and Y8s who wait in the Hall before and after school, glued to their phones, sits uncomfortably with us; so too, the urgency of many of our students to pull their phones out mid-corridor at the 4 o'clock bell and blithely blunder into passers-by.

So as a school, we are taking the steps to remove the ease of access to phones. It is not a radical step, as up to now they have not been allowed to make use of them within the school hours of 8.45am to 4pm. But we are shifting to not allowing phones to be used on-site or on school-related activities at any time (with some exceptions – please the FAQs above).

In addition to the wide range of co-curricular clubs and societies that we provide in school, we will also be providing board games, card games and books for students to use in that down-time ahead of the start of school and over lunchtime. Such open-ended opportunities to relax and connect outside of the classroom will also help to foster that sense of belonging and connectedness that is such an important part of belong to the RGS.

We welcome your support with this minor, but hopefully impactful shift with mobile phones.

Please take a moment to read the FAQs. If you have any further questions, then please do feel free to contact us via [communications@rgs.newcastle.sch.uk](mailto:communications@rgs.newcastle.sch.uk)