



24th January 2025

Dear Parents and Carers

Mobile Phones

A good number of parents and carers will have watched or been aware of the recent documentary on Channel 4 hosted by Matt and Emma Willis where students at the Stanway School in Colchester gave up their mobile phones completely for 21 days, and listened intently to the science and debate around this (<https://www.channel4.com/programmes/swiped-the-school-that-banned-smartphones>). It is obvious that over recent years the ownership of a 'smart' phone for young people has become a right of passage perhaps as one joins secondary school or at an even younger age with children being able to access or falling unexpectedly into inappropriate content, often using apps or other platforms where the legal age of accessing these is older than they are.

Certainly in school, we have seen young people using social media in a manner which has caused us significant time and effort to unpick and work through. Although the internet is a wonderful tool in many respects, the situation we find ourselves in, where young people are walking around with a super computer in their pockets, has undoubtedly led us to some unintended consequences. Some of the research figures around the amount of time teenagers are on their phones is staggering certainly but also equally important is that they are changing how childhood is for this generation. I listened to a compelling argument recently about the fact that now young people have phones we know where they are all of the time using apps such as 'find my phone'. As a parent of a teenager myself, I know that is reassuring to myself and to them at times, however the argument put forward was that they never have a chance to build resilience in the way previous generations did. Certainly in the past, young people went travelling around Europe or further afield as slightly older teenagers and their parents and carers heard from them only on a grabbed phone call. Now, there is the chance to see where they are all of the time and therefore the question is 'are they as young adults able to break away and stand on their own two feet' perhaps? It made me think!

Here at Chew Valley, we have for a long time not allowed mobile phones to be used during the school day and we have asked for these to be switched off and placed in the bottom of school bags. We have clear consequences if these are seen which involve removal for the rest of the day if it is the first time or for a whole week if this is a repeated occurrence. Despite this, we still have, in a minority of cases, phones being accessed and indeed some communication taking place despite us being clear that if there is an emergency then parents and carers can communicate with their children via the school office.

Certainly nationally, there is a growing powerful amount of parent voice which is looking to move away from young people having access to smart phones too early and this includes <https://smartphonefreechildhood.co.uk/>. Other schools have completely banned smart phones being brought into school saying that the only phones acceptable are 'dumb phones' which have no internet capacity but allow texting and calls to be made so that parents and carers can communicate for safety reasons.

Other secondary schools in the Lighthouse Schools Partnership (LSP) are looking at introducing Yondr pouches (<https://www.overyondr.com/>) where students have to place their phones in a magnetic pouch for the day where no messages can be sent or received and these are only 'unlocked' at the end of the day.

In moving this forward, we have, along with other LSP schools, linked with two academics from the University of the West of England and are looking to carry out some research into this area which will no doubt influence our decisions as a school in the future. We will be working with students,

along with parents and carers, to look at usage and views through some questionnaires we will send out. We may also run a number of discussion sessions as well. I am looking forward to seeing the results and making decisions around this really important area.

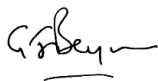
Parents' Evenings – Years 11 and 9

We are in the middle of some important communication with parents and carers at the moment. On Tuesday this week, we held our Year 11 Parents' Evening where really important conversations took place following the mock examinations at the end of last term. Year 11, along with Year 13, are on the final approach towards their examinations in the summer and I know how key the discussions will have been. Next Wednesday, 29th January, will be the turn of Year 9 who are going through the process of choosing their options to take into Year 10. Again, those conversations will be vital in supporting our young people in thinking about their future hopes and aspirations.

A reminder that **Friday 14th February** is an **INSET day** and we will therefore be closed to students.

Please do contact us with any questions you might have or visit our website at <https://www.chewvalleyschool.co.uk/> for further information.

With best wishes,



Gareth Beynon
Headteacher

Key Dates

Wednesday 29 th January	-	Year 9 Parents' Evening
Thursday 13 th February	-	Term 3 ends for Students
Friday 14 th February	-	INSET day
Monday 24 th February	-	Term 4 begins