



12th February 2025

Dear Parents and Carers

Mobile Phones – Work with the University of the West of England

In my regular letter to parents and carers a couple of weeks ago, I introduced the topic of mobile phone usage with young people and I cited 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 (<https://www.channel4.com/programmes/swiped-the-school-that-banned-smartphones>).

I talked about the growing amount of parent voice which is looking to move away from young people having access to smartphones too early and this includes organisations such as <https://smartphonefreechildhood.co.uk/>. I mentioned that some schools have completely banned smartphones with only 'dumb phones' being acceptable which have no internet capacity but allow texting and calls to be made so that parents and carers can communicate for safety reasons.

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

Along with Backwell School and a number of primary schools within LSP, we have looked to partner with the University of the West of England (UWE) to carry out some research into mobile phone usage amongst young people, both around the policy of the school arrangements during the school day and also through their general use.

In developing our work further, it is really important that we are able to find out the views of students and staff along with parents and carers on the matter and to that end we have put together some questionnaires for each group to complete. As you might expect working with a university, this has been put through an ethics committee in order for this to be done in an appropriate manner and this was needed to be signed off before we proceeded.

Students in Years 7 to 9 are in the process of completing their surveys in their IT lessons and we have also emailed the link to Year 10 students should they wish to complete the survey. Between them, they cover the four year groups that are going to be most influenced by any change in policy within the school. Staff as I say are also completing a questionnaire.

Below is the link to the parent and carer questionnaire. It is a comprehensive survey which will contribute meaningfully to discussions around smartphones and smartphone policies, so views are very important. We will close the consultation on Tuesday 4th March at midday.

https://uwe.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_b2QjheMjcEZPgai

I would really appreciate if you could find the time to complete the survey. It would be my intention to publish a summary of the results to all parents and carers which will be interesting in itself. It will certainly then influence discussions amongst the school Senior Leadership Team and our governors around our strategy moving forward.

With best wishes,

Gareth Beynon
Headteacher