

June 2025

Dear families

Response to consultations regarding mobile phone use at The Castle School

We completed consultations with students, families and staff throughout May 2025, as part of our strategic planning to review the use of mobile phones at The Castle School.

Key findings from the consultation that have shaped our decision making:

Student survey: 83% of students in years 7 to 10 completed the student survey

- 98% of students bring their own mobile phone to school
- 94% of students use their mobile phones at break and lunch
 - o Of these students, 66% use their phones to communicate with someone else
- 58% of students have been asked to use their phones to support their learning in some way when in school over the previous week
- 21% of students have looked at or used their phones in lessons when they were not allowed to over the previous week
- 40% of students have time limits set on their mobile phones
- 68% of students have parents and carers monitoring their phone use
- 57% of students have their phones in their bedrooms at night

Parent and carer survey: 40% of our families completed the parent and carer survey

- A majority of families support stopping students from using their phones at break and lunch
- A significant majority of families support phones being placed into school bags on arrival at school, rather than being collected in by school

It is clear from both student and parent and carer surveys that the main reason for wanting students to retain their phone use at break and lunch is linked to being able to communicate. It is also clear that many families and staff want students to have school experiences where they do not have to rely on or use their phones. Staff are clear that there are many more positives to be gained by restricting mobile phone use, particularly when we consider how many students tell us that they are distracted by phones and use them when they are not permitted. Mobile phones are not required for learning to happen, and if we expect students to need devices for their lessons, it would create a lack of parity for them and places students in uncomfortable or difficult situations if they do not have a device.

Our Governors have been fully involved in the rationale, consultation and decision making.

Response to consultations:

Students will not be allowed to use their phone when in school at all from Monday 30 June 2025. The simple expectation is not to see or hear mobile phones at all. Students may have their mobile phones switched off and in their school bags when at school. Students will not be permitted to have their phones in their pockets or on their person.

Most students will not need to communicate with a parent or carer during a typical school day. However, if there is an urgent or important reason for a student to communicate with a family member when in school, they should go to the Student Reception during break or lunch where we will do our best to facilitate this on their behalf. Likewise, if there is a message that needs to be given to your children while they are in school, you are welcome to contact the Main Office.

All staff at The Castle School will ensure they do not ask students to use a mobile phone when in school. If technology is required to support learning, computers or devices will be arranged by the member of staff. Trip leaders will decide and communicate with families in advance of visits if we believe it would be advantageous to have a mobile phone.

We believe there are excellent technologies that support learning, and we will continue to set some homework that will need to be completed by using a device. Our Library is open from 8am until 5pm every day, including break and lunch, which does allow work to be completed when in school without using a phone.

We shall be printing a copy of every student's timetable, so they have a paper copy given to them on Monday 30 June and will eliminate the need to use a phone to check their timetable.

The Behaviour for Learning Policy will be updated to reflect the following sanctions that will be in place if students do not follow the phone use expectations:

- Any student whose mobile phone is seen or heard will have their phone confiscated immediately, to be returned to them at the end of the school day from the Main Office. They will be given a 30-minute lunch detention as a sanction.
- If a student's phone is confiscated more than once in a term, the school will confiscate the device and only return it to a parent or carer.
- On the rare occasion that a phone is confiscated again, the school will insist that the phone is handed in to the school for a period of five additional school days.
- It is vital that there are clear behavioural expectations around mobile phone use as a deterrent for students, so that they understand the consequences of their actions.

We ask for your support with the implementation of our expectations around mobile phones. Please take time to discuss this with your children so they fully understand that mobile phones cannot be used in school at any time.

We shall be sharing this information with students through assemblies in advance of Monday 30 June, so they are fully aware of the expectations, as well as ensuring that there is good signage around the school to remind students.

If there are any circumstances that may warrant the need for your child to use their mobile phone when in school, please contact your child's Head of House. For example, we have a small number of students with medical conditions who use their phones to monitor their health, which we shall facilitate as a reasonable adjustment. These adjustments will only be made in exceptional circumstances and with permission from a leader in school, who will provide them with a physical pass.

Thank you for your support with this important change at The Castle School. We shall be setting up an evening at school in the Autumn term, where we will be able to support families with managing devices out of school, setting up time limits and how to monitor your child's phone and risks online and in apps. We look forward to seeing some of you then, and hope that our joined-up commitment to supporting our students' phone use will have a positive long-term impact.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Wordsworth', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mr J Wordsworth
Head of School
The Castle School