

2 February 2026

Dear Parents and Carers,

Firstly, I want to express how grateful I am to work in a school where mobile phones are not part of the student culture. Your support—and the students' buy-in—has been vital in helping us create such a happy school environment. At breaktimes, students draw, play card games, chess, badminton, basketball, football, or simply chat with their friends. This is in stark contrast to many schools, where students spend their free time (and sometimes lesson time) looking for opportunities to check their phones.

However, I would also like to clarify the process we follow if a student is found with a mobile phone in school.

- **On the first occasion**, the phone is confiscated, an after-school detention is issued, and parents are required to collect the phone from the school office.
- **On the second occasion**, as per our behaviour policy, the school will keep the phone for **three school days** before returning it.
- **On the third occasion**, the school will keep the phone for **five school days**.

I fully appreciate that this can be inconvenient. However, mobile phones are not needed in a secondary school, and this graduated set of sanctions is designed to ensure students do not use their phones during the school day. So far, we have had only four incidents of mobile phone use since we opened in September 2024, and no student has ever had a phone confiscated more than once. I simply wanted to make sure the process is clear should this occur in the future.

This approach has recently been reinforced by a stronger line from the Department for Education and the Secretary of State for Education, Bridget Phillipson. On Monday morning last week, all headteachers in England received a letter, from which I share a short extract below:

"I have always been clear that mobile phones have no place in schools — I know many of you feel the same. But it is clear that the previous guidance did not deliver the clarity or consistency that schools need or help enough in setting out for parents that this is a clear national position. That is why we have strengthened it to be explicit — all schools



should be phone-free environments for the entire school day. That includes lessons, time between lessons, breaktimes and lunchtime. It means, for example, it is not appropriate for phones to be used as calculators, or for research during lessons.”

Bridget Phillipson, Secretary of State for Education

Furthermore, I have been encouraged by the government’s recent intention to consult on a possible social media ban for under-16s. Even here at River Academy, we spend significant time addressing issues arising from the misuse of phones outside of school, which can lead to difficulties within school.

Thank you, as always, for your ongoing support.



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Headteacher
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