

Dear Parents and Carers,

I am writing to you regarding mobile phone use in schools and, specifically, our approach at River Academy.

As you may be aware, the Department for Education has now confirmed national guidance stating that **mobile phones should not be accessible to pupils throughout the school day**. This includes during lessons, between lessons, at breaktime and at lunchtime. A link to the relevant government guidance can be found below:

[Mobile phones in schools - GOV.UK](#)

I am pleased that this national position strongly supports the strategy we introduced at River Academy in September 2024. In a recent communication to the Headteachers' union ASCL, the Department for Education clarified:

“The parameters of our ‘mobile phones in schools’ guidance are clear: pupils should not have access to their mobile phones throughout the school day including during lessons, the time between lessons, breaktimes and lunchtime.

We trust headteachers – who know their schools, their pupils, and their context best – to choose a way of delivering that outcome that works for them. Our case studies already set out multiple models for doing this.”

This clarity is reassuring, and the legislation has come into force without any disruption to daily life at River Academy.

Secondary school- the smart phone as a ‘right of passage’?

I understand that many young people now see a smart phone as a ‘right of passage’ when they begin secondary school and many of our current students do use their devices with care and maturity. However, I am writing to challenge this purchase and the necessity of it and to ask you to consider an alternative. I would like to encourage you to **consider a brick phone as your child’s next mobile phone**. I realise this is a controversial statement and is a brave parenting decision, but I believe it is one that will have many worthwhile positives for parenting, family life and the well-being of your children.



The government is also currently considering further controls on social media use for under-16s. A national consultation on this issue runs until **26 May**, and while final details are not yet confirmed, the Education Secretary, **Bridget Phillipson**, has stated that some form of restriction will become law.

As a school, we spend a disproportionate amount of time addressing the **negative consequences of out-of-school messaging**, often taking place late at night, unsupervised, and beyond the reach of parental monitoring. We have seen incidents involving online harassment, bullying, and exposure to inappropriate content, including pornography and graphic violent imagery, accessed via social media apps.

I am sure you would agree that the **addictive nature of social-media algorithms**, combined with the unsupervised access provided by smartphones, presents a significant challenge to young people's wellbeing, behaviour, and focus. The primary device facilitating this is the smartphone.

Staying in Touch and Safety

We fully recognise the importance of parents being able to remain in contact with their children on their journey to and from school. Many families also value the reassurance provided by location tracking.

For these reasons, alongside many other schools — including Reading School — we strongly recommend **brick phones** as a sensible compromise. These allow calls and texts without unrestricted access to social media, messaging apps, or unsuitable online content.

For families concerned about tracking, a simple solution such as an **AirTag discreetly placed in your child's bag** can provide the same reassurance as tracking apps such as Circle, without the wider risks associated with smartphones.

I also understand that many children use phones as part of the homework process, but I hope the money saved on phone tariffs could be used to purchase a tablet that would allow students the same accessibility to apps such as Sparx Reader and Sparx Maths that we use at River Academy.

We believe that this approach supports young people's **safety, focus, mental health, and learning**, while still respecting families' need to stay connected. Thank you for considering this suggestion and I hope it has given you all pause for thought.



Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in grey ink that reads "A. Hatley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Headteacher
River Academy

