

FAQ: Mobile phones (Updated 03.07.19)

What happens if I need to contact my child urgently or get a message to them in the day?

Please call reception 01273 561281 and give them an idea about what the problem is. They will be able to get messages to students or arrange for them to come out of lessons in an emergency. If it is about a more private/sensitive matter, you could ask to speak to the medical officer or school base who can then liaise with your child.

What happens if my child uses their phone in school time?

The same process as usual will apply, phones will be confiscated and secured at reception, refusal to hand over their phone becomes a disciplinary matter and will be logged and sanctioned as per our behaviour policy

What happens if my child repeatedly uses their phone in school?

Parents will be asked to collect the phone from school, additionally the student would be asked to hand in their phone at the start of the day and collect it at the end.

Are there any exceptions where the policy won't apply?

On school trips or holidays, the use of mobile phones will be outlined in the parental information.

What if my child finds that their phone helps with recording homework on a calendar, will they still be able to use it?

No. The alternatives to this are to use a diary or planner. Prep is recorded on Varndean Plus, there are very few occasions where students are expected to write down their homework.

Can my child use their phone to listen to music at break and lunch?

No. We would like students to be enjoying spending time with friends, actively involved in games or reading for pleasure in the library. If your child is feeling alone at break or lunch, please contact their tutor to discuss activities and interventions that would help.

My child is quite isolated at school and uses their phone to stay occupied at lunchtime, I am worried about them not being able to use their phone

If your child is feeling alone at break or lunch, please contact their tutor or school base to discuss activities and interventions that would help. ILS already have a lunchtime club for SEN students. We are looking into running a lunchtime group that school bases can refer students to.

Can my child access GCSEpod or other revision sites at break and lunch if they are revising?

They can access these sites from the PCs in the library and prior to PPE examinations we will be looking to open rooms with chromebooks/PCs for supervised quiet study at lunchtime.

Can my child use their phone to access Google drive to send teachers homework or share files in school?

No. Each department and schoolbase has access to chromebooks should students be required to share files and where possible homework should be shared/emailed from home.

Will the school teach sensible mobile phone usage, self-regulation and how to keep safe online?

Yes. This will remain part of the learning for life curriculum and assembly focus. School bases will continue to support and signpost parents to resources and information that help students do this.

My child has ASC. Their support plan advocates the use of headphones. Is this still acceptable?
Sensory breaks taken in learning support are discussed on an individual basis and professional, parental and school opinions are all considered in the formation of their school support plan.

Will my child be able to take photos etc of work on the board/other students work - these examples really help at home with prep?

No. Missed work can be photocopied from another student. Students are given time to copy examples down or handouts are provided. If required, practical work can be photographed using school cameras.

How will the school ensure that if my child is sent inappropriate images or messages that this can be dealt with in school?

The school will continue to apply the behaviour policy (<https://www.varndean.co.uk/policies> section 6.3) for incidents involving electronic communications and social media

Phones are emotional crutches to some students and potentially this will cause anxiety.

The school will be introducing mobile free days in July to prepare students. We are also looking at how we support our young carers and other vulnerable groups with the changes.

My child may need to check their food account balance and ask me top up, how will this work?

WisePAY balances can be checked by students in the canteen using the account loader and vending machines. Balance reminders are sent out manually each week to parents whose account balance is £0 or below. WisePAY do not currently offer the option to send out reminders when accounts fall below a certain amount, although this is something we will be looking into in the near future.

If your young person does need to call you to top up their account whilst in school they will be able to go to school base or reception and use a phone there.

My child needs to use their mobile phone as it monitors a medical condition, will this be allowed?

Yes, students/parents will need to communicate this with our medical officer carolineheath@varndean.co.uk Staff will be informed that these students have consent to use their phone for this purpose only.

Research and information

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/328371592_Associations_between_screen_time_and_lower_psychological_well-being_among_children_and_adolescents_Evidence_from_a_population-based_study

<https://cep.lse.ac.uk/pubs/download/dp1350.pdf>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-47095053>

<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2017/09/has-the-smartphone-destroyed-a-generation/534198/>

<https://www.varndean.co.uk/page/?title=Senior+Students+and+Student+Voice&pid=46> (See under 'senior students' section the health and wellbeing student constituency feedback on mobile phones)