

10<sup>th</sup> February 2014

Dear Parents / Carers,

### **Lower School – Information on Mobile Phones and Electronic Devices**

As you will be aware, Hinchingsbrooke School's policy on mobile phones and other electronic devices changed in September 2013. We recognise that mobile phones are an essential part of adult working life and as such are keen to embrace their use. Indeed, allowing students to access the resources that such devices offer has been extremely beneficial in promoting greater independence in students' learning in the classroom. As well as a desire to embrace new technology, allowing mobile phones provides us with greater opportunity to educate young people in how to use such devices responsibly, working in partnership with parents.

Inside the classroom, where use of electronic devices is guided and closely monitored by staff, there is little scope for this technology to be used in an inappropriate way. However, outside of the classroom where students have greater freedom and opportunity to use these devices, there is greater scope for inappropriate use and students must therefore be guided by their own common sense and judgment. Whilst many Lower School students have the maturity and awareness to understand how a seemingly innocent action could be misinterpreted or lead to unintentional consequences, there will always be some students who act before they think.

It is with this in mind that I am writing to clarify and reiterate my expectations of how Lower School students should be using mobile phones and other electronic devices outside the classroom:

#### Acceptable use of technology (outside of lessons):

- \* Listening to music through headphones
- \* Playing games (provided that the sound is muted or headphones are used)
- \* Using the internet for research or entertainment purposes.

#### Unacceptable use of technology:

- \* Any activity where sound is audible and therefore likely to disturb others
- \* Taking **ANY** photos or videos even with the subject's consent
- \* Any use for purposes of bullying such as abusive text messages and use of social networking etc.
- \* Any usage which is not age appropriate (e.g. accessing certain internet sites, age-inappropriate games).

There are some uses of mobile technology which are less easy to regulate. Whilst we would not encourage students to use their phones to call or text one another, we realise that it may be necessary for students to contact parents / carers or siblings and vice versa. We would also always encourage students who need to contact home for any reason to do so through the Lower School Office, as further assistance is then available should students require it.

Whilst this may seem unnecessarily prescriptive it is important to remember that even if 99% of students are behaving responsibly, the impact of poor behaviour from the other 1% should not be underestimated. As part of our on-going commitment to developing responsible and reflective young people, form tutors will be discussing not only these guidelines, but also the rationale behind them and encouraging students to consider the impact and consequences that inappropriate use of technology can have. I urge you to take this opportunity to talk to your child about their use of technology, if you have not already done so.

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With technology and trends developing so quickly, we can never hope to have all the answers to tomorrow's potential problems but by seeking to engage regularly with young people, we can, as a school and as parents and carers, hopefully promote common sense and positive outcomes. Finally I am keen to reiterate the fact that the vast majority of students in Lower School are using technology appropriately and so hopefully this will be an opportunity to confirm to them that this is the case.

I thank you in advance for your support in this matter.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kate Tandy". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line underneath it.

**Mrs Kate Tandy**

Head of Lower School

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