



Dear Parent/Carer

I am writing to raise two issues which have concerned me recently in the hope of securing your support going forward, which in turn will ensure that Bramcote College students are enjoying greater personal safety in school.

Phones in school

You may be aware that in February the Government issued new guidance to schools regarding the use of mobile phones to support headteachers in prohibiting the use of mobile phones throughout the school day, including at break times. Our intention is to publish an updated mobile phone policy at the start of the new school year, in the interim, this guidance can be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65cf5f2a4239310011b7b916/Mobile_phones_in_schools_guidance.pdf

We have always had a very clear policy about the use of phones at Bramcote College; mobile phones should not be seen or heard during the school day, including break and lunch times. What is becoming increasingly apparent, is that there is a growing level of hidden mobile phone use in school, which reveals itself when children have been found to have images or footage of peers and even staff on their phones. Additionally, our Student Support team have noted that when phones are confiscated alerts keep flowing, with Snapchat and other messages from peers both within our school and from other schools. In addition to this, some parents are contacting their children on their mobile phones, rather than going through reception, unfortunately, undermining our policy. This normalisation of constant access to phones has created an issue this week which we have had to resolve, involving the use of phones in PE changing rooms which could have posed a safeguarding concern had we not dealt with it quickly. As a result, PE staff will be strengthening supervision in the changing rooms to reduce the possibility of phone usage. It has also been made clear to students that as well as the rule that phones should not be seen or heard, a common sense and mutual respect approach should ensure that changing rooms remain phone free spaces.

Schools do have the power to ban phones outright, which would mean that they are not permitted to be carried on site even in school bags. While we have always trusted our students not to use their phones in school, frustratingly, a handful of events of misuse of mobile phones has led me to think that a ban may become inevitable; currently my only reason for continuing to allow them to be brought into school is the safety of children as they travel to and from school, which I understand is important for parents'/carers' peace of mind. We have already asked all students to not wear smart watches without exceptions because they are constantly accessible, however, I would prefer not to add mobile phones to this prohibition.

Going forward, we are reiterating to students that phones must be switched off and that they must now be stored in their bags, not in blazers or trouser pockets (except in very specific medical circumstances e.g. when linked to an insulin pump). The ease of accessibility and temptation created by having phones in pockets has become an issue. I would also like to count on your support in reducing students' dependency on phones during the day by asking you not to contact your child on their phones when they are in school; if a message needs to reach your child, please phone reception and your message can be delivered to them. If students need to get in touch with home for any reason (including feeling unwell), they should go to Student Support where a member of staff will phone you for/with your child.

This separation from mobile phones is a very important habit for children to get used to, not only because there is a lot of research coming out about the negative impacts of technology dependency, but also because looking forward, students must get into the habit of being without phones and smart watches during exams, as they are not allowed into exam rooms by the JCQ and will have to get used to being without their phones when they go out into the world of work in the future.

The only exception to this is that on occasions, class teachers may ask students to take phones out of their bags for a specific time-bound and supervised task.

Road Safety/Moor Lane and access to school site

I have written to Bramcote College parents on previous occasions regarding road safety and parking on Moor Lane, which can become a very congested and potentially risky area at the start and end of the school day due to traffic congestion. I am writing to remind you to continue to be considerate regarding parking as we have over 800 children accessing the school site every day, as well as over 500 who access Bramcote Hills Primary School, making their collective safety a priority. Inconsiderate parking/waiting causes problems for local residents and makes crossing the road dangerous for our children. I am aware that in response to concerns raised by a range of stakeholders, Highways England are planning to add new double yellow lines on parts of Moor Lane and Deans Croft to ensure that traffic has the space to keep moving and to ensure there are safe places for children to cross the road. There is also an area of yellow zigzags outside the school gate which signify that there should be NO STOPPING or TURNING in this area.

I would also like to address the speed of cars coming off Moor Lane and onto the school drive to reach our main Reception. As I am on the school gate regularly at the start and end of the school day, I have noticed several vehicles regularly passing me at potentially dangerously high speeds, considering the number of children who are using the school drive. While staff also use the school drive at the start and end of the day (and so will be spoken to this week), I would like to ask you to drive safely if you cannot avoid coming up the school drive at busy times. In an effort to minimise the number of cars on the school drive at busy times, we will be issuing permits to parents for children with specific mobility or SEND issues only. Staff on the gate will ask to see your permit during peak hours and I would ask all parents/carers to be courteous and considerate when speaking with

any member of staff if they ask to see your permit. To ensure the safety of students on the drive, please be aware that you may be refused vehicular access if you do not have a permit. If your child is late to school and you are dropping them off, please ask them to walk up the main drive to sign in at Reception rather than driving them up yourself. Please support us in this matter. We are not trying to be difficult; your child's safety is extremely important and managing both traffic and students at the start and end of the day has become more challenging as the school has grown.

We are drawing up a list of students who currently have permission to be brought to the main reception in a car. We will send a permit home via your child by Friday 12th July; please keep this in your car. If you do not receive a permit by Friday 12th July and believe your child should have one, please email: bramcote@whptrust.org.

I believe very firmly that a good relationship between school and home is the foundation of success for our young people, and as such, I am always grateful for your ongoing support, especially in difficult matters like phone use and driving habits. My requests in this letter centre around our core value of keeping students safe in and around school.

I will be writing out to you next week with a round up of the events of this term, key dates for the end of this term and the start of next year (for now, please be advised that Friday 12th July is an INSET day), staff updates and reminders about uniform changes in readiness for September.

Warm regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'H. Gale', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Heidi Gale
Headteacher
Bramcote College