



OUR REF :

TRN : 100259955100003

DATE : Monday, 4th March 2019

To : Parents of students in all phases of the school : CAUTIONARY ADVICE ABOUT VARIOUS SOCIAL MEDIA, THE DANGEROUS MOMO CHALLENGE AND ADDITIONAL MEASURES @ SCHOOL WITH REGARD TO SMARTPHONES FOR YEARS FIVE TO NINE

Dear Parents,

Greetings from St. Mary's. We would like all parents to please take a look at the school website to access some valuable and informative advice about various Social media to better enable you to understand their influence on impressionable minds and to help you best decide how to monitor and/ or regulate their usage by your children. We have also included a separate link about the dangerous MOMO challenge which we would really appreciate you reading and then spending time with your children to talk about the dangers with regard to this. This information was uploaded on the 1st of March 2019.

ADDITIONAL MEASURES @ SCHOOL WITH REGARD TO SMARTPHONES FOR YEARS FIVE TO NINE : We as a school have always supported parents' requests to allow children upwards of year five to bring smart phones to school due to the fact that a vast majority of the children use the metro to travel to school and back home and therefore you as parents like to be in touch with them for reasons of their safety.

However, the smart phones which are supposed to be switched off and kept in student lockers are most of the time with students, in their bags or their pockets and are being indiscriminately used by them during lessons, on the play ground etc. This has proven to be an overwhelming distraction and a lot of productive man hours in then dealing with these issues is becoming impossible to manage. We have observed that students in years 5-9 have not yet developed a responsible attitude in their use of smart phones. These phones are not merely a distraction for their owners but also prove to be a huge source of distraction for their classmates.

Therefore to enable children to be better focused on their lessons during the day and be 'more present' and actively engaged in these lessons we are moving to a 'NO PHONE DURING THE SCHOOL DAY POLICY'

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOUR CHILD?

Your child (years 5-9) will still be allowed to carry his/ her smart phone to school because we certainly do understand your concerns for their safety on the way to school and on the way home after the school day is done. They MUST BE SWITCHED OFF AS SOON AS THEY REACH SCHOOL.

HOWEVER, CLASS TEACHERS WILL COLLECT STUDENTS' SMARTPHONES AND LOCK THEM AWAY SAFELY AND RETURN THEM TO THE CHILDREN AT THE END OF THE DAY. We have even altered some of our internal timings to now have a class teacher registration time at the beginning of the day and the same time at the end of the day. We believe that it is important for every class to meet their class teachers at the end of the day to share important 'news of the day', any issues they have faced, concerns they have or any misunderstandings that have occurred during the day in other lessons or on the playground.

What will happen if a smart phone is then found with a student ? (because he/ she did not hand it in)

In this case, the phone will be taken away and only the SIM CARD returned to the parent. The phone will be returned to you at the end of the academic year.



A NOTE TO OUR DEAR STUDENTS :

“Whether intentional or not, the phone can remove us socially, intellectually, and emotionally from being present with those we are with. The decision to move to ‘Phones Away During the Day’ was thoughtfully intentional too. We want us all to have a greater opportunity for face-to-face connections. Not being presently focused has increased social isolation issues. While the majority of social media can be intentional and positive, it can also cause others to feel left out, judged, anxious, and targeted. We hope you will reach out to a friend or teacher if things are hard. And, we hope you will take the time to think it through yourself. Less phone time will make that possible.

A huge part of why we come to school is for this in-person socialization. In our connected environment, we learn from each other, teachers and other students. We learn to work together, take turns, listen well, speak up, question things publically, and to be collaborative. At school, we do these actions face-to-face.

We are in a technology revolution—something that has changed our society. The challenge is to learn to not let it control our society. We adapt and adjust to make improvements when things are not working well.

We are sure that even you as students realize that there is a lot of misuse of phones in school and this is negatively impacting your learning experiences as well as your relationships with both the adults and peers at school.

Students from year 10 – 13 are allowed the use of their phones for lessons, for research and in place of a tab which they use in lessons. This is once again from continued observances about a far greater responsible use of devices as shown by older children.

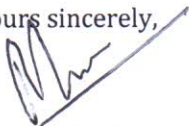
IN CASE OF ANY EMERGENCIES, THE SCHOOL WILL MOST CERTAINLY CALL PARENTS IMMEDIATELY and in the case of a child requiring to urgently call a parent, they may do so from the school office.

Let us talk to our children at home about what an emergency is and what situations call for them having to use the office phone. For example : I haven’t got a good mark in a test- I want to call my mum’ is certainly not an emergency and must be dealt with at home. OR ‘ I have left my trainers at home and I have after school practice so I want to call home for them’ - is also not an emergency.

Let us help children be better prepared for the school day by gently asking them if they have all that they need for the next day.

We are counting on your support and collaboration to make sure that the children benefit from their learning experiences without the distractions of their SMARTPHONES. We are not BANNING SMARTPHONES FROM SCHOOL, WE ARE JUST KEEPING THEM AWAY SAFELY DURING THE DAY FOR OPTIMUM LEARNING AND A DISTRACTION-FREE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT.

Yours sincerely,



**Mr. Paul Asir Joseph
(Principal)**

