

Case Study: Rebecca Taylor, Assistant Librarian, Kingston Grammar School, London

Phone-Free Friday and the impact this campaign had on the students' learning

The project focused on aiding the students' concentration by creating a technology-free zone that was more suited to studying as well as encouraging a positive activity that supported good mental health practices. My aim was to measure the impact of a phone-free study area by how many students chose to use laptops or books instead of phones to research. Also, the impact on the school, through a wide spread phone-free day. The focus was on whether motivation of the students increased, whether there was a decrease in phone usage and whether students handed in phones to the librarians.

The first part of the project was developing posters and advertising the campaign within the library; the second was to instil a safety box for students' phones where they could be stored in an access friendly way. I developed resources, worked with the teachers and individual pupils. Sixth formers who had supervised study were encouraged to hand in their phones. This allowed other students who were doing group work to follow the same initiative.

As a school our aim is to create an environment for students *"in which we work together to encourage the highest academic aspiration and to promote independent thought; one which provides opportunity for engagement in a rich and diverse co-curricular programme, which expects everyone to show a proper regard for people and our environment and which develops in all of us a culture of service, partnership and personal integrity. Live well and be happy."* This project, by encouraging a phone-free study area, promotes productive behaviours that support good mental health practices. It also will contribute to a greater focus on work and increased academic attainment due to less distractions from phones.

Several references were used including:

- www.kgs.org.uk/blog/kingston-diary-are-traditional-communication-skills-declining
- www.kgs.org.uk/blog/mobile-technology-a-return-to-simpler-times
- mobilesocialwork.wordpress.com/2013/07/25/how-young-people-use-mobiles-top-7-statistics-from-the-mobile-youth-report/
- www.theguardian.com/education/2017/dec/15/schools-approach-to-mobile-phones-varies-widely-in-uk
- Conversations with school librarians Helen Cleaves, Sarah Humphreys and Lucy Macfarlane.

The outcome of the project was successful. A student reported that *"being able to hand in my phone is great as it has improved my productivity without having to put in more time."* This set a trend for various other sixth formers to hand in their phones, as students would remind each other to put their phones away by pointing to the posters. It also had a big impact on social media, and clearly indicated an issue as it created a widespread discussion with many other school librarians and teachers online. This online response engendered a first school generated Phone- Free Friday Campaign.

The school has maintained its commitment to the Phone Free Friday programme, recognising the benefit of decreased mobile phone usage to pupils both academically and in their personal lives. This event was also very successful with the younger years and was started on Children's Mental Health Week Odd Sock Day. This was recognised in an article written by the headmaster, Mr Lehec, who stated he would be *"introducing some new ways of making sure that our students are using their mobiles safely and not to the exclusion of other positive forms of interaction. Look out for initiatives coming your way."* www.kgs.org.uk/blog/mobile-technology-a-return-to-simpler-times.

The Library also encouraged a digital downtime event for World Book Day, a book and a biscuit event which many students enthusiastically participated in.

Tips:

1. Try and get other departments or the wider community involved. If teachers help support the campaign, encouraging the students to not use their phones will be a lot easier.
2. Send out letters to parents about encouraging limited use of phones in school and suggest they do this at home too.
3. Start small, maybe hint to a few students they have been using their phones to much. (Getting students on board to encourage their peers is helpful!).