



### **Phone-Free School – FAQs**

| <b>Question Group</b>                 | <b>Pages</b> |
|---------------------------------------|--------------|
| <b>Why are we doing this?</b>         | <b>1</b>     |
| <b>Pouch Specific Questions</b>       | <b>2-4</b>   |
| <b>Unlocking Stations</b>             | <b>4-5</b>   |
| <b>Beginning of the day Questions</b> | <b>5-6</b>   |
| <b>Consequence Questions</b>          | <b>6-8</b>   |
| <b>General Questions</b>              | <b>8-10</b>  |

#### **Why are we doing this?**

At Highdown we want to be a phone free school. We have tightened our policy and procedures in recent years, but we have not yet reached our ambition. We have looked at practice at other schools and believe pouches are the best solution for Highdown.

No phones will mean that students are able to study without the distraction of phones. Many studies have shown that even the presence of a phone causes distraction and is a barrier to deep learning. Students who study without the distraction of phones achieve better in their exams and we want our students to achieve their best.

Not having a phone will allow all students to also focus on real life interactions developing interpersonal skills and relationships. We also want to encourage students to be more active. Without phones students are more likely to participate in physical activities which is great for physical health and mental wellbeing.

Another big reason is to reduce cyber bullying. We know that mobile devices can sometimes be used for negative things like bullying, and we want to create a safer and more supportive environment for everyone. By banning phones, we're hoping to cut down on these issues and make school a more positive place.

Lastly, privacy is another important factor. Mobile devices can be used to take photos or videos without consent, which can invade the privacy of students and staff. By using pouches, we can help protect everyone's privacy and maintain a respectful environment.



Overall, the decision to ban mobile devices is school in about creating a positive, engaging and safe learning environment for everyone.

### **Pouch-specific questions**

**1. Do you have to pay for the pouch?**

No. The school pays for the first pouch issued.

**2. Do we have to replace it if we break it?**

Yes. There will be a charge of £18 to replace the pouch if it is lost or damaged. This cost may rise in the future.

**3. Will the pouch protect my phone?**

No. The pouch is NOT a protective case, and you must still look after your phone as you would if it were not in a pouch. Students are responsible for their personal possessions, and the school takes no responsibility for such devices brought to school.

**4. How do they lock?**

There is a small locking pin at the top of the pouch. Students will 'push' this to the locked position each morning in mentor period in front of their mentor. The pouch can only be opened at a Yondr unlocking station that are located near the entrances/exits to the school.

**5. Will I fit my phone, smart watch and earbuds in my pouch?**

- Yes – but it is a tight fit depending on the size of your property!
- But – smart watches should not be in school! Leave it at home and it is not a problem!
- The phone must be in the pouch. Most brands of earbuds will also fit, but if they do not, they must be off and in your bag. Any earbuds or other types of headphones seen in school will be confiscated.



**6. What if I forget my pouch?**

You will hand your phone to your mentor in mentor period/at line-up, (your mentor will hand your phone into the school office just in the way a 'phone collection' is currently). Your phone will be kept in the school office, and you will collect it at the end of the day. A C1 will be issued.

**7. What if I accidentally put my phone in my pouch at home (e.g. at the weekend) and it locks?**

You will need to unlock it when you are next in school. We advise that you lock your pouch when you leave site each day to avoid this happening.

**8. Will the pouch fit all phone sizes?**

Yes.

**9. How bulky are the pouches?**

They are made of lightweight, slightly padded material and large enough to fit all phones and a smartwatch and Air pods, (remember that smart watches are not allowed in school, so it is best to leave these at home anyway).

**10. Does the pouch have a tracker?**

No.

**11. What happens if I spill something on the pouch?**

Accidents happen. The pouch will dry and it is water repellent. It is not waterproof – you must still look after your phone.



## **12. Can I personalise my pouch?**

No. The pouch remains the property of the school and will need to be handed in when you leave school or at the end of year 11.

### **Unlocking Stations**

#### **1. What if there are too many students trying to get their phones unlocked at the same time? How will we manage the queuing system?**

There will be more than enough unlocking stations. Yondr recommend one unlocking station per 100 students. For the remaining weeks of the 2025-26 academic year, we have 10 unlocking stations and senior staff will be monitoring with handheld unlocking stations to ensure queues do not build up. We will then reflect on the 'flow' of students and add more unlocking stations as needed.

#### **2. What if I forget to unlock my phone pouch at the end of the day?**

You can either return to school to unlock your pouch or enjoy a phone free evening.

#### **3. Will students be able to unlock their pouches during the school day? What if there is a family emergency?**

No, students will not be able to unlock their pouches during the school day. If there is an emergency at home parents/carers will contact the school and we will then speak to the student as appropriate. If there is an issue in school and a student needs to contact home the student should speak to their teacher or Head of Achievement.

#### **4. Will students that get the bus have priority in the queue.**

No. There will be more than enough unlocking stations.

#### **5. What if I arrive late to school or am leaving early (e.g. for a medical appointment)?**



As you do now you will report to student reception to sign in. Staff at reception will sign you in and watch you place your phone and wearable tech into your pouch. The member of staff signing you in will record your attendance on the register and that they have seen you pouch your phone.

Failure to do so, refusal to do so or claiming you do not have a phone (when you are not named on our central list) will result in this being logged on ClassCharts and our normal processes will begin (e.g. behaviour team/senior leader checking, searching, confiscating as appropriate with appropriate consequences applied).

If you are leaving early (with permission) you will be able to unlock you pouch at reception.

## **6. What happens for sports fixtures and school trips?**

The default position of the school is that phones will be in pouches. However, trip leaders will determine if students need access to their devices for either health and safety or educational purposes. Trip leaders will have handheld unlocking stations.

### **Beginning of the day questions**

#### **1. What is expected when you arrive on site?**

- Unlock your pouch at an unlocking station and make your way to either line-up or mentor period (year group depending)
- Turn off your phone and place it half in the pouch.
- Show your turned off phone to your mentor. Your mentor will tell you to place your phone fully into the pouch and to lock it.
- Place the pouch in your bag.

#### **2. How will searches/checks work?**

If staff have reason to suspect you are accessing your phone during the school day, we will ask to conduct a brief search of your possessions to ensure that this is not the case and that your phone is in its Yondr pouch. In addition, we will conduct random spot checks during mentor time, at social times and sometimes in lessons. We will do our very best to ensure that these are as brief and unobtrusive as possible.



**3. Will I be searched if I say that I don't have a phone?**

Yes, we will randomly search people whether they say they have a phone or not.

**4. What happens if the morning queue is so long that I am late to mentor period?**

We expect some minor delays in the first week or so of this scheme. The school gates are open for students from 8am. Students should come into school as soon as they arrive and unlock their pouch. We anticipate that this should not be an issue once everybody gets used to the routine, and as such, they should not be late to mentor time or assembly.

**5. What happens if I accidentally relock my pouch before mentor period or have already locked my phone in my pouch before my mentor has checked?**

The morning routine that we are practicing this side of the summer holiday will ensure that this is a very rare event. If a phone is pouches before the mentor has seen the phone, then the pouch will be confiscated, handed in to reception and its contents checked.

If the pouch is accidentally locked in mentor period before the phone is placed in the pouch, then you will hand your phone over to your mentor and will collect it at the end of the day from reception. If you do this regularly then consequences would follow.

**Consequence Questions**

**1. What if I deliberately avoid putting my phone and wearable tech in the pouch? This could be by saying that I have not got a phone or placing a different phone or other item in the pouch etc.**

- You **MUST** show your phone to your mentor before it goes into your pouch.
- We will conduct random checks.
- We maintain a list from parents of students that do not have a phone.
- If we are suspicious, we will search students and their bag, lockers etc...



- If found, **your phone will be confiscated and only returned to a parent/carer.**
- You will be given a C3 detention, (first instance).
- Refusal to hand your phone over will lead to out of routine and potentially further consequences.

## **2. What if I try to unlock the pouch?**

You risk breaking your phone.

Damage caused by trying to unlock your phone without an unlocking station is easy to spot. You will be charged for a new phone pouch and will need to hand your phone in every day until you have a new pouch. This is a more serious breach of our policy and could lead to an internal suspension.

## **3. What happens if a student is seen with a phone or wearable tech outside of their Yondr pouch?**

The phone will be confiscated and **only returned to a parent/carer.**

A detention will be set on ClassCharts. More serious consequences will be set for repeated behaviour.

If the student refuses to hand over their phone in this scenario, then our normal procedure will be followed. The student will be placed out of routine; their phone will be confiscated and only returned to parents. Continued refusal at this point would result in a fixed term suspension in that same way it does now.

## **4. What is to stop me buying a magnet off the internet?**



You would be wasting your money. Most of the magnets do not work. Yondr have tested them.

This would be a very serious breach of our policy as a student doing this would be deliberately trying to undermine our goal of achieving a phone free school. The consequence for this will be a C4 up to and including a suspension.

**5. What happens if I bring a phone to school but forget the pouch?**

You will need to hand your phone into your mentor and collect it at the end of the day from student reception. A C1 will be recorded. There is no consequence for this if it occurs rarely. Once the school day has started, if the device has not been handed in, then a consequence will be given. If the pouch is always forgotten then it would be assumed to have been lost and you will be charged for new pouch.

**6. What happens if your phone audibly goes off during the school day when it's locked in the pouch?**

Your pouch will be confiscated by your teacher, and the behaviour team will take it to reception. A C2 detention will be set. Phones should be in pouches and switched off. The phone going off disrupts learning.

**General Questions**

**1. How will I check my timetable?**

You are already not allowed to use your phone during the school day so there is no change here. You will be provided with another copy of your timetable before we launch Yondr.

**2. How will I check messages from home?**

Just like now you will not be able to check your phone during the school day. At the end of the day, you can check your phone when you unlock your pouch. If parents need to contact you urgently, they will contact the school, and we will come and get you.



### **3. How will I check if I have a detention?**

Just like now you will not be able to check your phone during the school day. In most cases, you will know if you have a detention as the teacher giving the detention will have told you. If you are unsure, you should check ClassCharts once you have unlocked your pouch at the end of the day. You could also ask your period 5 teacher.

### **4. How will I tell the time?**

You are allowed to wear a watch. You are **not** allowed to wear smart watches. These should not be in school and if you accidentally bring a smart watch it must go in your pouch. Teachers have been asked to check clocks in their classrooms and report any that are not working to the Estates Team.

### **5. What happens if a student damages their pouch?**

If a pouch is damaged a student must inform their mentor of the damage. If they do not and the damage is seen during an inspection, then the damage may be assumed to be deliberate, and a new pouch will need to be purchased.

It is easy to take good care of your pouch. Remember that your phone is in the pouch. Therefore, do not put your pouch at the bottom of your bag under heavy books. You could break your phone! Keep your pouch on top of books/heavy items or keep it in a separate compartment of your bag.

Once you have retrieved your phone at the end of the day **lock the pouch**. This helps protect against accidental damage.

### **6. Why do I have to unlock the pouch when I arrive to school? Surely it is easier to arrive to school with the pouch already unlocked.**

Locking the pouch at the end of the day is important because:

- It helps to protect the locking mechanism from accidental damage.
- It will stop annoying friends or siblings from locking your phone in your pouch when you are at home!

### **7. What if there is an emergency in school e.g. evacuation or lockdown?**



Our emergency protocol already states that student phones must be off and in bags. Students must not use their phone in either an evacuation or lockdown. The school will communicate with the emergency services and parents in these situations. This follows best guidance from the government and the emergency services.

**8. What if I see another student on their phone/with their phone out of their pouch?**

They are breaking the rules. Report them to a teacher and we will deal with it appropriately.

**9. What if I do not have a smart phone?**

All types of phones need to be placed in the pouch whether this be a smart phone or a 'brick' phone. We are a phone free school.

**10. What if I do not have a phone?**

You will still be issued a pouch, and you will still be expected to bring it to school every day and present it when your mentor group are placing phones and wearable tech in their pouches every morning.

There will be a different coloured name card on your pouch to indicate that you do not have a phone.

The pastoral team/mentor will contact your parents termly to check that you still do not have a phone, and they will sign/date your name card so all teachers can see when this was last checked.

**11. What if I forget my blazer?**

You will still be able to borrow a blazer from the Bridge and should do this either before mentor period or during mentor period if you only realize you do not have it after 8.40am. You will still hand your phone over as a deposit for the blazer. Only you will need to hand you phone over in your Yondr pouch. Staff in the Bridge will check the contents of your pouch first.



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