

Our Ref: PMC/ZAR/5747/26



Dear Parents/Carers,

Subject: We are Phone Free with Yondr

At Upton Hall School we are committed to creating a learning environment where every student can thrive. Our young people are growing up in an increasingly complex world, living their lives on and offline. This presents many exciting opportunities – but also academic, emotional and social challenges. From Tuesday 2 June, we introduced mobile phone pouches into our school.

On the 19 February 2026, the DfE updated their guidance on the use of “Mobile phones in schools”. Their expectation is outlined in the document as follows, “All schools should be mobile phone-free environments by default; anything other than this should be by exception only.” The exemptions are only for students with a disability or medical condition such as diabetes. Please note students who have special educational needs, social anxiety or emotional and mental health issues are not classified as having an exemption and will still be expected to have a mobile phone pouch. Indeed, a mobile pouch will ensure a more focussed and stress-free learning environment. On Monday 29 June, it became law that all schools in England should be mobile phone free. To enable that to happen, we are using mobile phone pouches at Upton.

The introduction of mobile phone pouches is not just about limiting screen time, it is also about giving students the space to think deeply, engage meaningfully, and thrive in an educational environment designed for their growth.

For over a decade, Yondr has supported schools in more than 40 countries to build healthier, more engaging school cultures. Their pouch-based program, combined with hands-on guidance and dedicated support, has led to powerful results:

- 86% reported improved safety and student wellness
- 84% saw increased engagement in class
- 44% reduced behavioural referrals

How the Programme Works

It is anticipated that each student who wishes to bring a mobile phone to school will purchase and be assigned a Yondr pouch - a secure, lockable case for storing personal devices.

Students are responsible for bringing their pouch to and from school each day and keeping it in good condition.

- **Upon arrival:** Students power off all smart technology including their mobile phones and smart watches, place all devices in the pouch, and lock it in front of a teacher during period 1. It is advisable to switch their phones off to save their battery.

Upton Hall School FCJ

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Headmistress: Mrs Andrea Gaunt BSc (Hons) NPQH

- **During the day:** Students keep the locked pouch in their backpack or locker.
- **At dismissal:** Students unlock pouches at designated stations to retrieve their devices.

This process is quick, simple, and will be supervised by staff as part of our daily routine.

Staying Connected

With student safety as our top priority, we will follow our standard safety protocols in the event of an emergency. If you need to reach your child during the school day, please contact our main office at 0151 677 7696.

Students who wish to bring a phone to school will be required to purchase a Yondr mobile phone pouch at the cost of £16.00. The pouches will be added to your daughter's Scopay account for purchasing from Wednesday 1 July. The deadline is for payment is **Tuesday 1 September** to enable us to sort them all before the beginning of term in preparedness for distribution on Thursday 3 September 2026.

Thank you for your continued support as we work together to create an even more focused, present, and positive school environment for every student.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A Gaunt', with a horizontal line underneath.

Mrs A. Gaunt
Headteacher

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

General questions

Were other companies sampled?

Yes. Mr McAleese gathered different samples from Yondr, Quiet Case, UK Phone Pouches, HUSH and School-Bears. Student and staff voice were gathered on the products.

Have students been asked their opinion on the pouches?

Yes, a range of students were asked in each year group (estimate around 100 students) and the majority favoured the Yondr pouch for its size, use and appearance.

£16.00 for a phone pouch seems quite high?

We feel that the cost is fair when we consider the cost of a phone cover and indeed the phone itself. For people who want to bring their phone into school, this pouch now forms part of school equipment. If you do not require a phone for your journey to and from school, you can always leave your phone at home. Please note that £16.00 is the cost to the school and based on non-profit as we want the system to work.

How do we pay for the phone pouch?

Following this letter on Friday 20 March, we will place the phone pouch as an item on scopay. The deadline is Friday 15 May and the phone pouches will then be distributed on Tuesday 2 June.

How does Upton help us as parents keep my child safe online?

We adhere to the DfE guidance on relationships and sex education and health education which provides students with tailored and age-appropriate lessons to ensure that students are knowledgeable about healthy relationships and how to stay safe online, including how their information and data can be shared and how to consider the effects of their online actions. Sometimes the police also help us with these key messages by delivering assemblies throughout the academic year.

Students who need to raise a concern with teachers about issues which have occurred online will have access to their mobile phones where necessary; this is in line with the DfE guidance on 'Mobile phones in schools'.

What else can we do as parents to support this new policy?

In the DfE guidance, parents are recommended to support school by explaining the school's expectations and reasons behind implementing this policy "including the risks associated with mobile phone use and the benefits of a mobile phone-free environment" (DfE guidance on 'Mobile phones in schools', February 2026).

Morning and Afternoon Procedures

How quick is the unlocking process?

The unlocking process is quick and students typically do not need to break stride. While students are still getting used to how to unlock pouches, staff will be on hand with mobile unlocking stations to stop queues forming in the first few weeks. If needed we will add extra unlocking points.

What if my child arrives late or needs to be dismissed early?

The main office will have an unlocking device for students to monitor students arriving late or leaving early.

Will my child's phone be safe?

Students are in possession of their phone in their Yondr pouch for the entire school day. We will advise students to store the pouch safely in their backpacks. While the Yondr pouch will provide some protection, it is not a protective case, so students should continue to handle their phones with the same care they normally would to prevent damage.

What happens if a student forgets to open their pouch at the end of the day?

In Yondr's experience, this almost never happens. All students funnel past the unlocking stations at the exits and they typically want their phones back. If they do arrive home with a phone in a pouch, they can either come back to school to unlock it or have a phone free evening!

What happens if a student forgets to bring in their pouch?

The student's phone will be collected and securely stored in the school office until the end of the day. Parents/carers will be contacted and reminded of the procedures. If the pouch is repeatedly forgotten their pouch will be treated as lost and a replacement £20.00 will be charged. We suggest that students leave the pouches in their school bags and pouches must stay in the locked position when not at school.

Daily Pouch Use

What if my child needs their phone for medical reasons?

We have an alternative solution for the small number of students who require their phones for medical reasons (e.g. diabetes). We will be in touch with these families if they have informed us of their medical condition.

My child currently does not bring a phone to school, how will this work for them?

Please send an email to your child's Head of Year via the year group email and we will discuss next steps.

What happens if a phone is seen outside of a pouch?

If a student is found in possession of a phone **outside their pouch** on school site the phone will be confiscated, the student suspended and the phone returned when a parent/guardian picks it up from the school site. The DfE guidance on 'Mobile phones in schools' states, "Headteachers are backed by DfE to confiscate mobile phones and similar devices, if they consider it proportionate, for whatever length of time they deem proportionate."

Bag searches may be conducted in line with the new DfE guidance on 'Searching, screening and confiscation in schools' if staff have concerns that a student has a mobile phone on them that has not been placed into their pouch.

Should a child misbehave in this way by breaching the school's behaviour policy and mobile phone policy, the DfE guidance on 'Mobile phones in schools' now suggests that "Schools should consider whether this misbehaviour gives cause to suspect that a pupil is suffering, or may be at risk of, harm. Where this may be the case, as set out in part 1 of *Keeping Children Safe in Education* school staff should follow the school's child protection policy and speak to the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy). They will consider if pastoral support, an early intervention or a referral to children's social care is appropriate."

What happens if my child's phone is confiscated and is lost or damaged?

The phone remains the responsibility of the students as well as the use of the phone pouch. The Law protects staff from liability in any proceedings brought against them for any loss or damage to items that have been confiscated as a sanction, providing they have acted lawfully.

Can my child use their phone in intervention?

No. Teachers have been advised that this is now a blanket ban for the use of all mobile phones in lessons as per the DfE guidance.

What if the Yondr pouch gets damaged?

Any attempt to tamper with the Yondr system, including use or possession of high-strength magnets will be treated as a serious offence, potentially resulting in a replacement fee of £20.00, confiscation of their device until collected by a parent and suspension.

If accidental damage occurs, students must report it immediately. If damage is discovered during checks and has not been reported, it may be considered intentional. Students will be provided guidelines to lock their pouch when they leave school to avoid any accidental damage.

The pouch should not be used as a replacement for a protective case and/or screen protector on a mobile device.

We will be conducting random pouch/spot checks over the full academic year to assess the condition of pouches.

Will school offer a 'buy back' service?

Yes. When the student leaves Upton Hall, we will only offer to purchase mobile phone pouches back that are in excellent condition. We will offer a maximum of £10.00 on the basis that we will offer 'pre-loved' mobile phone pouches to other students at a non-profit of £10.00.

Emergencies

What if there is a school emergency?

In an emergency, the priority is for students to follow school safety procedures under staff guidance.

Unauthorised phone use during such situations may:

- Delay emergency responses
- Spread misinformation
- Put students and staff at increased risk
- Disrupt coordinated safeguarding measures

Emergency communications will be managed through the school.