

29 April 2025

Dear Parent/Carer

We are writing to let you know about an upcoming change to our procedure around mobile phone use at Haydon School.

We currently operate a 'see it lose it' policy, where teachers confiscate phones if they see them out during the school day. This unfortunately leads to conflict if students refuse to hand them over, and introduces a number of negative conversations between teachers and students when we would like interactions to be positive, and about learning. From a student perspective, we also understand that it is challenging to walk around all day with an item in your pocket you are not allowed to look at, when out of school they are used to having full access to them. This presents a challenge!

There is significant evidence suggesting that the access young people have to mobile phones and the platforms associated with smartphones can have a negative impact on mental health, wellbeing, and the ability to concentrate on other things. I have linked below a small selection of articles that it would be helpful to look at regarding the effects of excessive mobile phone use in young people.

<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/news/teenagers-problematic-smartphone-use-are-twice-likely-have-anxiety>

<https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/smartphones-children-adolescence-mental-health-social-media-b2720374.html>

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/jan/03/psychiatrist-children-smartphones-mental-health-harm>

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2024/dec/17/children-swiped-channel-4-smartphones-mental-health-addiction>

We are not suggesting that smartphones are entirely negative. There is a positive side to them, and they allow students access to information and resources that the previous generation did not have. However, they are not conducive to creating an effective learning environment during the school day, and are causing an unnecessary distraction for students, and

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preventing them from talking to each other, and developing the essential face to face social skills they will need to be successful in life.

For this reason, we are planning to introduce the use of lockable phone pouches. A summary of this process is as follows:

- Students will be given a lockable neoprene phone pouch.
- On arrival at school, students will lock their phone in the pouch for the day.
- Students will keep the locked pouch with them all day
- We provide unlocking stations at the end of the day for students to unlock the pouch as they leave school.

There are of course other details regarding how this will be managed in school, which we will communicate to you closer to the time. We are letting you know now so that you can support us in preparing your child for this change, as we are aware how attached some children are to their devices.

In making this decision, we have taken advice and visited other schools who have introduced the same policy, who have seen huge benefits in how students conduct themselves during the school day. Some of the benefits include;

- Improved focus on lessons without distractions
- Reduced opportunity for online bullying
- Prevention of students arranging to meet each other outside lessons at inappropriate times
- Improved mental health
- Improved communication and social skills

We will communicate more details regarding how this will work closer to the time, but in the meantime recommend a recently released documentary on the effects of smartphones, on channel 4. It is worth watching, perhaps with your children.

<https://www.channel4.com/programmes/swiped-the-school-that-banned-smartphones>

Your sincerely,



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FAQs

What if I use my child's phone to track their location?

We would recommend the phone is switched off before going into the pouch, but it could be left on and turned to silent so you could still do this.

I contact my child on their phone during the day for emergencies?

The students shouldn't be using their phone during the day. In an emergency, we are very happy to take a call from parents through the main school reception, and will then relay the message to your child.

Sometimes my child contacts me to ask me to top up their dinner money account

It is absolutely fine for any child to approach their year office or pastoral team to ask them to contact you to do this. We don't want children going hungry!

What happens if my child forgets their pouch?

We'll send out further details of the exact logistics of this procedure closer to the time. For now, we just want to allow students to prepare for this change. We are hoping to begin this towards to the end of the Summer term.

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